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SARAH, DUCHESS OF MARLBOROUGH

*From a painting by Sir Godfrey Kneller at Althorp
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SARAH DUCHESS OF MARLBOROUGH

BY
KATHLEEN CAMPBELL



LONDON
Thornton Butterworth, Ltd.

THIS IS FROM
NEW BOOK CO., BOMBAY.

First Published September 1932
Second Impression November 1932
First Impression in The Keystone Library September 1933

To
E. F. H.
BORN 1864, DIED 1928,
THIS, WITH HIS DAUGHTER'S LOVE.

P R E F A C E

SARAH, first Duchess of Marlborough, has not lacked biographers. From the time of Fielding onwards that inescapable picturesqueness, which even in her own day made her a tradition and almost a legend, has proved a candle to that moth-like tribe.

I have tried not to be content with picturesqueness, but to get beyond and beneath it. It is for others to judge my success or failure.

It may perhaps not be amiss to say here that I have throughout this study limited myself to the purely biographical approach. The literature rather than the history of this age has until now been my especial province, and it will be abundantly clear that I only attempt to deal with the history of these years in so far as it is necessary and relevant to the part played by the Duchess: and certain more controversial matters, notably questions of the Church, I have inevitably presented chiefly from her purely political standpoint.

The Duchess herself wrote an account of the political events in which she had taken part. This she published in 1742, calling it *An Account of the Conduct of the Dowager Duchess of Marlborough from her first coming to Court to the year 1710*. It is, allowing for the inevitable bias of an intensely personal document, invaluable as a source.

In 1838 two volumes were published entitled *Private Correspondence of Sarah, Duchess of Marlborough*. This only contained a few of her actual letters, consisting for the most part of letters addressed to her by her husband or letters addressed to him. Most of them were already available in Coxe. To the letters there are added her *Characters of her Contemporaries*—apparently notes for part of the *Conduct*—and her *Opinions*, a few informal and scattered comments on political affairs mostly dated 1737.

In 1875 there appeared *Letters of Sarah, Duchess of Marlborough*. These consist of letters written to a relation during her exile in Holland (1712-1714) and a few written after her return home. This is the only volume of the Duchess' private letters available, her correspondence never yet having been collected.

To one only of my predecessors am I indebted. Mrs. A. Thomson in 1839 published her *Memoirs of Sarah, Duchess of Marlborough*, in which, with great industry and a good deal of scholarship (in spite of constant inaccuracies in detail) she gathered together most of the materials then available and attempted not only an interpretation but an historical and political background to the Duchess' story.

In addition to Mrs. Thomson's Memoirs, my chief sources have been Archdeacon Coxe's monumental *Life of Marlborough* (1818), which is so fully documented as to be invaluable, especially on the political side, and Miss Agnes Strickland's *Lives of the Queens of England* (1847).

Miss Strickland was an ardent Jacobite and High-churchwoman, and was totally unable to deliver an unprejudiced judgment or give a detached account of any person or event in which her partisan sympathies were involved. I have therefore used her volumes chiefly as a guide to sources of which I should otherwise have been ignorant, for the extent and thoroughness of her historical researches are amazing, and she is (if one always remembers her violent prejudices) a mine of information.

My other sources are indicated, as they occur, in the footnotes. In cases where the material quoted from manuscripts is printed for the first time, I have given the number of the MS. in the British Museum catalogue, or the name of the collection in the Historical Manuscripts Commission Reports.

But Coxe was writing about the Duke of Marlborough and Miss Strickland about the Queens of England. The fully documented life of the Duchess of Marlborough cannot be written until the MSS. at Blenheim Palace are available to scholars. A joint life of the Duke and Duchess was published in 1914 "from the Blenheim MSS." but it contains very little of importance that was not already available and printed

P R E F A C E

in Coxe, and is both unintelligibly arranged and full of inaccuracies. Coxe, who had access to the MSS. had voluminous transcripts made from them, and—luckily for future students—deposited these transcripts in the British Museum. Unfortunately, however, for the Duchess' biographers, he kept strictly to the matters in hand, and the papers only bear on her in so far as she affected his own subjects—her husband, Sir Robert Walpole and the Duke of Shrewsbury.

It is not very probable that the Blenheim papers could add anything to our knowledge of the Duchess' character. The extent to which they could add to our knowledge of her life must remain a conjecture, though the list of MSS. given by the Historical Manuscripts Commission (Rcp. VIII, App.) suggests that they might amplify and document much of what must at present remain either slightly sketched or only inferred. It would also be of the greatest interest and value to have the original inedited drafts of the Duchess' various political narratives which we know were afterwards altered and cut down.

Perhaps, when Mr. Winston Churchill has found time to make use of them, the embargo at present placed on them may be removed and they may be available to other scholars.

The Duke of Bedford has also in his library at Woburn Abbey three volumes entitled *Letters of Sarah Duchess of Marlborough* (H.M.C. Rep. IV, App.) As these have never been referred to as sources in any book about the Duchess, it is very probable that they are only transcripts from letters already published. My application to his Grace to examine the volumes was met with a refusal for which no reason was assigned.

It is a pleasanter task to record gratitude than to chronicle disappointment. I offer my sincere and grateful thanks to Earl Spencer for his kindness and courtesy in allowing me to make use of the manuscripts and portraits at Althorp, and feel peculiar pleasure in being thus indebted to the direct descendant of Sarah's favourite grandson.

The drawing of Marlborough House facing page 258 has been made by my friend Major F. G. Harvey, and I gratefully acknowledge the gift. It is a composite one, and has been

PREFACE

made with the object of representing the house as it was built by the Duchess. Most of the available prints show the third storey which was added soon after her death, and there are but one or two contemporary steel engravings without it. These show, unattractively enough, the front elevation of the house. The drawing has therefore been copied from a water-colour of 1820, and the necessary alterations and omissions have been made from the details furnished by the steel engravings which give requisite and accurate architectural details.

I wish to thank my mother for the many hours of laborious typewriting which made my notes and transcripts so very much easier to deal with.

Finally, I feel I should record the exemplary patience of my publishers, which stood firm through delays, which, caused as they were by serious illness, were not less annoying for being unavoidable.

K. C.

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PART I

1660-1684

SARAH CHURCHILL AND THE PRINCESS ANNE

CHAPTER I

IT would seem that biography, like translation, should be done anew for every generation. Interpretations will vary though the originals be changeless. When they write histories of biography they have to begin a new chapter with the twentieth century, even perhaps with the post-war twentieth century. For it is now almost a commonplace to say that of late years the fashions in biography have changed. They are still on our shelves—those stately *Lives and Letters*, monuments of industry and propriety, calf-bound shrines for plaster saints on which the dust gathers from year to year. Keep them securely though, for their sleep will be disturbed once in a while when some young knight-errant, eager to prove more giants to be only windmills and Dulcinea but a kitchen wench, comes to their store and taking what he wants rides off, leaving the images in fragments and the pedestals in the dust. For iconoclasm is the mode, and his shield, above the device of a tarnished halo, bears the motto "How are the Mighty Fallen". The old war-cry of reality is upon us declaring death to romance and down with hero-worship. The *valet-de-chambre* has seized the pen. This is not the place to discuss disparagement as a method. We may but note, perhaps a trifle uncomfortably, that the greatest of the biographies have always been written by those who loved their subjects, and it is profoundly and blessedly true that you are more likely to be right about the character of someone you love than someone you hate. Macaulay, who wrote the history of England for the first forty-two years of Sarah Churchill's life, loved William III and hated the Duke of Marlborough. He could only whitewash his heroes by blackening his villains, and so we will hope he is right about William; but we know he was often wrong about the Duke and about Sarah his Duchess,

whom he also hated. If Mark Antony had been at hand to pronounce the funeral orations of John and Sarah Churchill, he would have found his phrase could serve again. For the evil that they did (and some they did not do) lives after them in the pages of Macaulay; but the good is interred there, stifled and smothered out of sight, ignored or denied. Well, one enemy more or less (and she had Thackeray too for a foe and a traducer) would have mattered little to Sarah Churchill. And it is almost fitting in a queer dramatic way that her inextinguishable vitality should have had the power to create new enemies when its "warfare upon earth" was over. Like the Achitophel she read about in Dryden's satire, and whom she knew at the Court as my Lord of Shaftesbury, she sought the storms (perhaps, like him, for a calm unfit) and when she could not have devoted friends would have for her implacable foes illustrious names, Swift, Oxford, Bolingbroke and Walpole—antagonists worthy of her steel.

We will do them this much justice. It was not easy to love the Duchess of Marlborough—at least after she came to power and great place. Almost as well might you set out to install the mountain torrent in your garden. Or so it seems to us now. Yet she was loved, almost as passionately as she was hated, which is saying a good deal. And by one of the greatest men in Europe, John Churchill, Duke of Marlborough, her husband, she was loved with a depth, a constancy and a passion that it is given to few women to have and to hold. For us, after two hundred years, to whom the strife of Roman Catholic and Protestant, of Jacobite and Hanoverian, of Whig and Tory, all the raging thunders of bygone political storms come only as a faint echo, it is easier than it was to understand, not why she was hated, because that was always easy enough, but why she was loved. The political passions of the Stuarts do not blind us now. We can view them curiously but unconcernedly. Our religious liberty is not threatened, however dramatic may be the debates on the Prayer Book; our King sits securely on his throne—there is no need of plots either to keep him there or to get rid of him; the Scots have abandoned armed insurrections in favour of peaceful penetration, and the Irish manage their own affairs

—one hopes to their entire satisfaction. Even the Stuart wars for civilisation can be judged dispassionately after their dust and heat, and those of us who have the good fortune to be able to believe in the panaceas of this political party or that may keep our invectives and our panegyrics for general elections. We do not need them for the Trial of Sacheverell, the Occasional Conformity Act or the Excise Bill. Another Gulliver, we can witness the debates in the Senate of Lilliput from Olympian heights of disinterestedness. And so we may have leisure to study in a dryer light than that of political prejudice, what manner of men and women fretted and strutted their hours upon a stage set two and a half centuries ago. A stage it was in many ways, and the word *dramatic* will often come unbidden to our minds when the story of the last years of the seventeenth century is told. There is so much of it that almost seems to belong to Ruritania and the romantic plays. A king fleeing into exile, beautiful mistresses, plots and counter-plots, the intrigues of court favourites, profligate lives and gallant deaths, heroic bishops and sinister priests—they are all there and a hundred times more romantic for being real. And the woman whose history we are concerned with lived her eighty-four years and played a great part through this period of upheaval and of changes so great that we have to come to our own times to find their parallel.

She saw the old order which flourished at her birth change and give way to new before her death. Her girlhood passed in a world from which the last enchantments of the middle age had not entirely fled, and her last disillusioned years were spent—though one may doubt if she ever quite realised it—in a world into which new enchantments had already been born. Wherever her shrewd old eyes looked they might see changes and her youth must have seemed very far away.

Seeing the short, dapper, unromantic figure of George II, she might muse over the house of Stuart and the divine right of kings—"the right divine to govern wrong" it was called later by a satirist of her own name. But on that December night when James II crept down the secret stairs of Whitehall palace and took coach for Sheerness he threw into the Thames more even than the Great Seal of England. The dark waters

closed once and for all over that preposterous and romantic doctrine. A poor fisherman brought up the Great Seal in his net. But all the king's horses and all the king's men could not restore a divine right to the throne. Sarah Churchill was twenty-eight when that happened, and she lived to see the birth of the no less preposterous but less romantic doctrine of the divine right of the man in the street. It is doubtful which of the two would have incurred her fiercer contempt.

But the divinity that hedged a king was not the only divinity that was to lose its worshippers in these years. The old beliefs were everywhere being attacked by the advance guard of scientific discovery and that scepticism which is the result of increased knowledge. Almost until now the frontiers of knowledge had been held to be well defined, and Bacon, the greatest intellect of the preceding age, had taken all knowledge to be his province. He must have been the last man who could say as much with sincerity. And as is the way of changes, the new things advanced over the ruins of the old, and during the childhood and youth of Sarah Jennings many of the old credulities and superstitions had begun to lose some of their potency. It was no sudden change, though. They were still to linger amongst the unlettered peasantry, almost completely cut off in those times from the remotest contact with the civilising influences of the metropolis, as they linger even yet, awaiting the days when wireless and the elementary school shall bring about their final overthrow. But when Charles II comes back and we begin to be concerned with the rise and fall of ministries, questions of political theory, church government and the rights of citizenship, all ringing so modern and so familiar in our ears, we must remember, if we are to get the picture anywhere near true, that there was another side to it and that there were under the Merry Monarch cruelties, ignorances and barbarisms, some of which it took longer than Sarah Churchill's lifetime to sweep away. The dreadful blot of torture remained on our statute books. Public opinion had not yet revolted against it, and though it was to be abolished in Scotland in 1690, and the English Bill of Rights declared against cruel and unnatural punishments, a man in the reign of Queen Anne might still be pressed to death for refusing to

plead—a situation we meet nowadays with a formal “Not Guilty”. The history of the Bloody Assizes in 1685 is terrible reading with its tale of savageries wreaked on both men and women. On October 23rd of that year Elizabeth Gaunt was publicly burnt to death at Tyburn for a political offence. The ghastly elaborations of torture and mutilation that accompanied many public executions were still tolerated and drew huge crowds to witness them. The heads of traitors were to rot for a few more years on Temple Bar and London Bridge. There were still those who believed in witchcraft. It was less than fifty years since James I, himself the author of a book on demonology, had led in person an unhallowed crusade against reputed witches, and 60,000 innocent victims of barbaric superstition met a cruel death during his reign. Even that wise and learned old doctor, Sir Thomas Browne, sceptical about so many things traditional and picturesque, did not include a belief in witches among the *Pseudodoxia Epidemica*, the *Vulgar Errors* he chid with such gentle irony. Conditions in prison for prisoners too poor to satisfy their rapacious gaolers with “garnish” or money for the barest necessities were such as are better imagined than described, and a man or woman might be condemned to years of unspeakable misery for a debt of a few shillings or hanged for the theft of a piece of cloth. The sanitary conditions in the heart of London could scarcely be paralleled to-day even by an oriental slum, and toll for them was rigorously exacted by the Great Plague of 1665. Blood sports in their grossest form, bull and bear baiting, cock and dog fighting, although beginning to arouse the criticism of a few of the more humane, continued to flourish, and fox-hunting enjoyed a sentimental glamour that the more sensitive imagination of our own century is only just beginning to dispel.

Such were a few of the relics from older and darker times, tokens by which we may perceive that Restoration England was something other than the twentieth century in fancy-dress, and that while there was much for which we should have understanding and sympathy, there was perhaps even more that, could we go back those two hundred and fifty years, would shock and horrify us.

Although Sarah Jennings was born into this world in many ways alien to us, she lived to see much of it pass away and an age more nearly akin to our own take its place. Her intellect and temperament belonged to the Revolution rather than to the Restoration. Her enmity towards William of Orange, unlike her final quarrel with Anne, was the result rather of the play of circumstances than of any deep-rooted antagonism, even though the qualities of self-control, diplomacy and wisdom which kept William on his throne were not those for which she is noted. But as was William, so was she in advance of her time in many ways, and it is that which, in the study of her character, impresses us with its strange modernity. Of course, any great figure with whom we become at all intimate will be found to have more in common with us than we might have suspected. An elaborate "period" background may be misleading, and there is much that could be said against the scientific study of history—or whatever it is called that objects to Shakespeare's *Cæsar* being in a doublet. For the layman it is not always easy to think of people as real when he sees pictures of them in chain-mail, togas, or full-bottomed wigs, and National Portrait galleries should be visited cautiously. But then, neither is it an undiluted pleasure to behold Hamlet in plus-fours. There hardly seems any satisfactory answer to this problem, and it must be enough here to state it. Its bearing on the matter in hand is that, looking at Kneller's portrait of the Duchess¹ (where it used to hang, dramatically enough, next to one of Abigail Hill) she seems remote, alien, belonging to a world which has forever passed. Coming to read her letters, hear her talk, watch her act, we become conscious that here is a woman who in essentials belongs, not indeed to all time, but to a period which had in it, under the periwigs and *fontanges*, many of the qualities we are fond of crediting to our own time. The moving singer writes, it is true, and having writ, moves on. No age can reproduce another, but must build anew on the foundations which have been laid in the old time before it. Between us and the eighteenth century there rolls the nineteenth, with its emotional, spiritual and artistic freights. We cannot, if

¹ In the National Portrait Gallery.

we would, rid ourselves of the myriad influences from it that still mould us. But it is not altogether chance or the whirligig of taste and time that have decreed Augustanism to be in fashion. Partly it may be that the eighteenth century is far enough away to have something of the picturesque and yet not so far as to be irrevocably remote, as the Elizabethan or early Jacobean times might be. The *décor* of the *Beggar's Opera* will charm us with its plumes, laced hats, patches and enormous petticoats, its pleasantly archaic highwaymen, its roysterer taverns and extravagant gaolers, for the shadow of Tyburn and the hangman's cart seem nothing more than part of the scenery. But it may be doubted whether the moment for its second popular success after an oblivion of two hundred years could have been better timed, or indeed could have come at all any earlier. The defiant realism which bids us look for drama amongst rogues and vagabonds, the glittering, fragile cynicism, the delicate make-believe sentimentality half-laughing at itself, the frank impropriety and the covert immorality, implied rather than expressed, all seem to need a special attitude and temperament to receive and appreciate them aright. Only a sceptical, disillusioned, artistic age could produce or applaud the *Beggar's Opera*. They flocked in 1728 to Covent Garden as eagerly as we journeyed to the Lyric theatre at Hammersmith. Shakespeare was dead and gone and Ben Jonson after him, and here was something different from the impossible romanticism, the grandiloquent and unconvincing falsetto which in their successors had almost ranted itself to death. And when they wanted comedy at the Restoration they wanted it as we like it, witty and improper, reflecting, heightened and stylised, the doings of the Smart Set. They went to the Queen's theatre in the Haymarket to see *The Beaux' Stratagem* and to Lincoln's Inn to see *The Way of the World*, and *Mariage à la Mode*, and to Drury Lane to see *The Old Bachelor*, and, as we do, went besides to many plays that are not as good as those are. For since 1918 we too have had our fill of make-believe heroism and false romanticism. The paste-board and tinsel have lost their spell, and we will no more of them, but will have artificiality or realism. War had lost its glamour too in those days, and the soldier

became merely a stock caricature on the stage. Caricatures have gone out of fashion with us, but the parallel holds nevertheless even there; for the Civil Wars had, though not for the last time, brought civilians face to face with the horrors of a battle-field, and there would be those in the audiences who would have heard first-hand tales of Edgehill, Naseby and Worcester. So, like us, they rejected pride, pomp and circumstance and turned to cynic laughter in their comedies. We go even further in revolt and make of our Blenheims a *Journey's End*.

You may watch the same process elsewhere during the years that Sarah Churchill was going to the London theatres with her friends and her royal mistress the Princess Anne. The novel, in England at least, was turning its back on Arcadia and exploring the world it lived in. Defoe went to sailors and footmen, courtesans and soldiers of fortune for his characters and set the fashion for low life. Fielding and Sterne describe the bourgeois England they knew as Smollett was to do after them, and although the beribboned shepherds and shepherdesses, driven from England, were to pipe their lays and dream their way through their *fêtes-galantes* a little longer on the canvases of Watteau, Lancret and Boucher, William Hogarth from his house in Covent Garden was soon to note the details of spunging-houses, brothels and taverns, telling his plain tales, not of Phyllis and Corydon and pastoral landscapes, but of mean streets and rakes' progresses with all the uncompromising force and unvarnished truth at his command. It was not, of course, all as simple as this. A detailed history of the arts would show cross-currents and complexities, relics of past ages and hints of future ones. But the signposts were clear enough, and after all a signpost does not set out to tell of all the little by-ways. For us it will be enough to note that novels, plays and pictures had left or were leaving behind the pleasant world of make-believe, and turning with a clear-sighted and observant gusto to the bustling, teeming, jostling, shouting world they saw around them. Arcadia was of the past, and the Land of Heart's Desire in the future. Meanwhile, there was London. Little wonder that the Duchess of Marlborough, who not only shaped but moulded the life of her time, is not to be numbered with the

romanticists and dreamers. Romance and dreaming had fled beyond her daily life of practical duties and political scheming as well as from her recreations among books, pictures and plays.

Curiously enough, though, they were still in town. We should recognise them to-day, for they had found their way to laboratories and quiet studies whence England's first great pioneer scientists were setting out on the long road that leads —whither? The seed sown by Francis Bacon was just coming to harvest, and men were beginning to observe first and reason afterwards from what they had observed, ridding their minds as far as possible of inherent prejudices, the idols of the Theatre, as Bacon called the shackles of tradition. So they dreamt and experimented and hoped and discovered, and felt as we feel now, that they were living in a world that had broken with the past, a world in which almost anything might happen. And from them the leaven went out, as it does to-day. Science began to be popular. Charles II himself spared many hours from his duties and even from his pleasures, to experiment in his laboratories. The brilliant, dissolute Buckingham is pictured by Dryden as "chymist" in the line which admits him as poet and statesman and lashes him as buffoon. Mr. Pepys and Mr. John Evelyn are bidden to the house of a friend to watch a scientific experiment, as we to-day foregather to play with wireless and television.

Nor were the poets behindhand, eager to be modern in every age. All the sciences were ransacked to furnish similes and metaphors *à la mode*. The poet courted his mistress in mathematics, bewailed her cruelty in chemistry, and described her in the lesser-known terms of geology and physics: the results, as sometimes happens still in modern poetry were, if not altogether intelligible, undeniably startling. This is what one of them could make out of a kiss:

"A page in decimo sexto will suffice
 For them, which if one should epitomise
 Like an arithmetician, that hath wrought
 And hath a unit to a cipher brought,
 He certainly no other thing should do
 Than cleave a geometrical point in two."¹

¹ Francis Kynaston. 1587-1642

Later on in the same poem the ardent lover continues

" Learned lapidaries say the diamond
 Bred in the mines and mountains of the East
 Mixt with heaps of gold ore, is often found
 In the half bird's half beast's the griffin's nest,
 Is first pure water easy to be prest
 Then ice, then crystal, which great length of time
 Doth to the hardest of all stones sublime " 1

Having touched lightly on mathematics and geology, he compliments the lady in chemistry—

" for I have read
 Of an extracted sugar out of lead
 Of which I once did taste, which chemists call
 Sugar of Saturn " 2

These are fair specimens, and there are many more poems in this style. Reading a love poem in those days must have been a little like doing a crossword puzzle to day—the qualities required for both being ingenuity and a fund of recondite information.

The fashionable Cowley penned an ode to the Royal Society, and Dryden, describing a year of wonders, gives it place with the Dutch War and the Great Fire of London, pleasantly foretelling that under its aegis

" we upon the globe's last verge shall go
 And view the Ocean leaning on the sky,
 From thence our rolling neighbours shall we know,
 And on the lunar world securely pry "

Cowley is no less eager and sanguine, triumphantly predicting

" Nature's great works no distance can obscure,
 No smallness her near objects can secure

lines which might appropriately have been prefixed to one of the more popular works of Sir James Jeans. Our poets laureate have not as yet hymned the British Association, but who shall say that in the columns of our daily papers, science

¹ To Cynthia On a Fan

² To Cynthia Sug, and her friends

is not "news"? Anyhow, science was news under the last of the Stuarts, and it had good reason to be so. Here, even more perhaps than in art and politics, the new world was coming into being. This is not the place for a history of the rise of science; Sarah Churchill's business was with men, not books or philosophies. But it is perhaps not irrelevant to remember that, with her acute, analytical, practical and logical mind, she was born into an age rich in scientific adventure and achievement. Harvey had done his work, and died in 1657 just before the Restoration. The year of the Restoration itself saw the founding of the Royal Society, and in 1663 the Marquis of Worcester was able to publish a *Century of Inventions*. The telescope, the steam-engine and the tugboat were there in the germ. The first astronomer-royal, John Flamsteed, began work at Greenwich and Edmund Halley, amongst other less known achievements, gave his name to a still-famous comet. The list is long and illustrious. Chemists, botanists, geologists and physicians have all to look back to these years for the founders and pioneers of their studies. The astrologers and alchemists, disproved and discredited, had to resign their insignia of office, their mystic abracadabra to other hands and fly with their bats, toads, owls and cats, to the booths of Bartholomew or Southwark fairs, precincts of the kind still sacred to them. The search for the elixir of life was henceforth to be continued by the doctors (they are still looking for it) while many firms dealing in synthetic jewellery have all but discovered the philosopher's stone. And one august name there is which alone would make this time memorable in the annals of science. Isaac Newton was born in 1642, when Charles I first raised the Royal Standard at Nottingham against his own subjects, and was quietly studying at Cambridge when Charles II was restored; but he was to come to honour and immortality during these years. We may perhaps remember here that although he was made President of the Royal Society under Charles II and Master of the Mint by William III, the year of his knighthood was 1705, in the reign of Anne, when her Grace of Marlborough had much to say in the bestowing of public honours.

It was a good time to be born in. Great events were being staged and great issues decided. Delivered from the political tyranny of Charles I by Cromwell, and from the social tyranny of Cromwell by Charles II, the nation, helped to the knowledge by the austere and passionate voice of Milton, was just beginning to understand the real meaning of liberty. The lesson is still to be learnt in full, but these were the years of its beginning. When another tyrant arose, this time with the yoke of an alien and detested religion, the new-born political sense of the nation had learnt how to deal with him, and with no tragedy of black-draped scaffold outside White-hall, reasserted both its ancient and its new-born rights without cruelty or bloodshed. As the years went on and tyranny religious and political, was again to menace not only England but the whole of Europe, the Lords and Commons of England, with the nation at their back, were to send, not for the last time, their gold and their armies across the Channel to fight once more for freedom. And they sent, too, as leader, a man whose shining genius was to render service without price to his country in battle and council-room, a man with a giant's strength but without a giant's tyranny, sensitive, polished and humane, whose lifelong homage and undimmed devotion rest like a crown upon the head of Sarah Churchill, his wife.

CHAPTER II

HE was dramatic, even in the time of her birth. The weight of age-long tradition had begun to make itself felt in the mind of a nation in revolt against government by soldiers and rent with internal dissensions, and in 1660 the people's thoughts turned wearily to their rightful King. The waiting and the hopes deferred were over; the secret plans, the careful scheming of many months were now to bear their fruit. General Monk's moment had come. So he marched south from Scotland with indeed the cry of "A free Parliament" upon his lips, but with another and a more momentous cause in his mind and heart. The Commons assembled and debated, and while they were debating came news that the die had been cast for them and that the King was already in Holland only waiting for English ships to bring him back to the England which in 1651 had driven him into nine long years of exile. Events moved quickly after that. All that last week in May, fleet horses carried their riders post-haste from Dover with news to the capital awaiting its King. On Wednesday evening, the 23rd, he set sail for England. On the 25th he had arrived at Dover to meet the eager crowds that thronged the very beach, while guns from ships and castle roared their welcome. A few days at Canterbury and then on to Rochester gay with be-ribboned garlands. Tuesday, May 29th, saw the last stage of the joyous journey when the coach carried him through the loveliness of Kent in May-time from Rochester to Deptford and from there to Southwark, where the Lord Mayor of London in panoply of scarlet and furred gown as now, handed to his King the insignia of the City. True to mayoral traditions, there followed a noble banquet, the tent brave with tapestry, which being completed, the procession formed for the last

and greatest scene in this pageantry of home-coming. And so with escort of trumpeter and herald, with march of scarlet cloaks laced with silver, with his great nobles and divers eminent citizens about him, the King passed on his way across London Bridge and through the narrow streets of the City. There were rich hangings and tapestry, there were flowers and garlands, there was music and cheering. The very conduits ran with claret. So they came to Whitehall Palace in the evening amid the clash and peal of bells, the thunder of the Tower guns, and the notes of the Te Deum echoed triumphantly through the fretted vaulting of Westminster Abbey.¹ The King had got his own again. . . .

The last reveller reeled home. The last bonfire sank to a heap of smouldering ashes. The tumult and the shouting died. But the story of that wonderful day printed hastily on crude news-sheets or carried by word of mouth had still to spread to country places. It came to Sandridge, a little village three miles from St. Albans, on the Wheathampstead road, in quiet Hertfordshire, and to Water End, the house of Richard Jennings, squire. They had much to think of at Water End just then, for on June 5th, in the midst of their rejoicings, a third daughter was born to Richard Jennings and Frances his wife.

It was many a year since the forbears of the Jennings had come to Hertfordshire. Some of their ancestors lay in the altar tomb of the ancient and beautiful cathedral of St. Albans. You may read of their lands in the Domesday book itself, and it was Henry VIII, at the spoiling of the monasteries, who gave to Ralph Rowlett the manor of Sandridge with Holywell House which became the dowry of his sister Joan on her marriage with Ralph Jennings, of (oddest of chances!) Churchill, in the county of Somerset.² They had lived peacefully there, raising their crops, ruling their tenantry and caring for their fish-ponds and dove-cotes until in 1610, when the first storm-clouds had gathered round the Stuart throne and John Pym was returned member for Somersetshire, Sir John Jennings laid the foundations of his house at

¹ *England's Joy*, 1600.

² *Conqueror's Household*

Water End, doubtless deeming them no more secure than those of the throne itself. He built and prospered, becoming Knight of the Bath, Sheriff of the County of Herts and member in the Long Parliament for St. Albans. In the troubrous years that followed he remained staunch to his King, adding his small troop of yeomen to the Royalist ranks, and when he came to die his son, Richard Jennings, Royalist and member of Parliament like his father, inherited Water End House. Richard's wife, whom he married in 1643, came of just such another stock, being the daughter of Sir Gifford Thornhurst, of Agnes Court, in the county of Kent. These were families rooted in the soil, courageous, just, honest and blindly loyal, clinging then as now to established traditions and faithful to their simple and accepted principles. No one, by temperament or conviction, could have been more indifferent to the claims of birth than the Duchess. "I am very little concerned with pedigree or families," she wrote to Burnet, though of her father's family she adds, "his was reckoned a good one, and he had in Somersetshire, Kent and St. Albans, four thousand pounds a year."¹

The simple pastoral scene in which this turbulent spirit first saw the light has never, with a right instinct, been identified with her. England in its tranquil intimate aspect, ordered, gracious, traditional—this is not the background for Sarah of Marlborough. In the gentle meadows of Hertfordshire to-day, set with poplar and elm, we fall to thinking not of the Duchess of Marlborough, her strivings and quarrellings, but of the sweet and peaceful spirits who have consecrated those quiet scenes to their memories. Of Walton first, most delightful of anglers, who took the road from Tottenham to Ware that fine fresh May morning; of Elia the beloved, who went with Bridget to Mackery End, within a gentle walk of Wheathampstead; of Cowper, the stricken deer, who sought at St. Albans a refuge for his tortured soul, and in happier days sent John Gilpin riding from Edmonton to Ware.

But to the child now to be born, it could well have been said "What hast thou to do with peace?" The fairies round

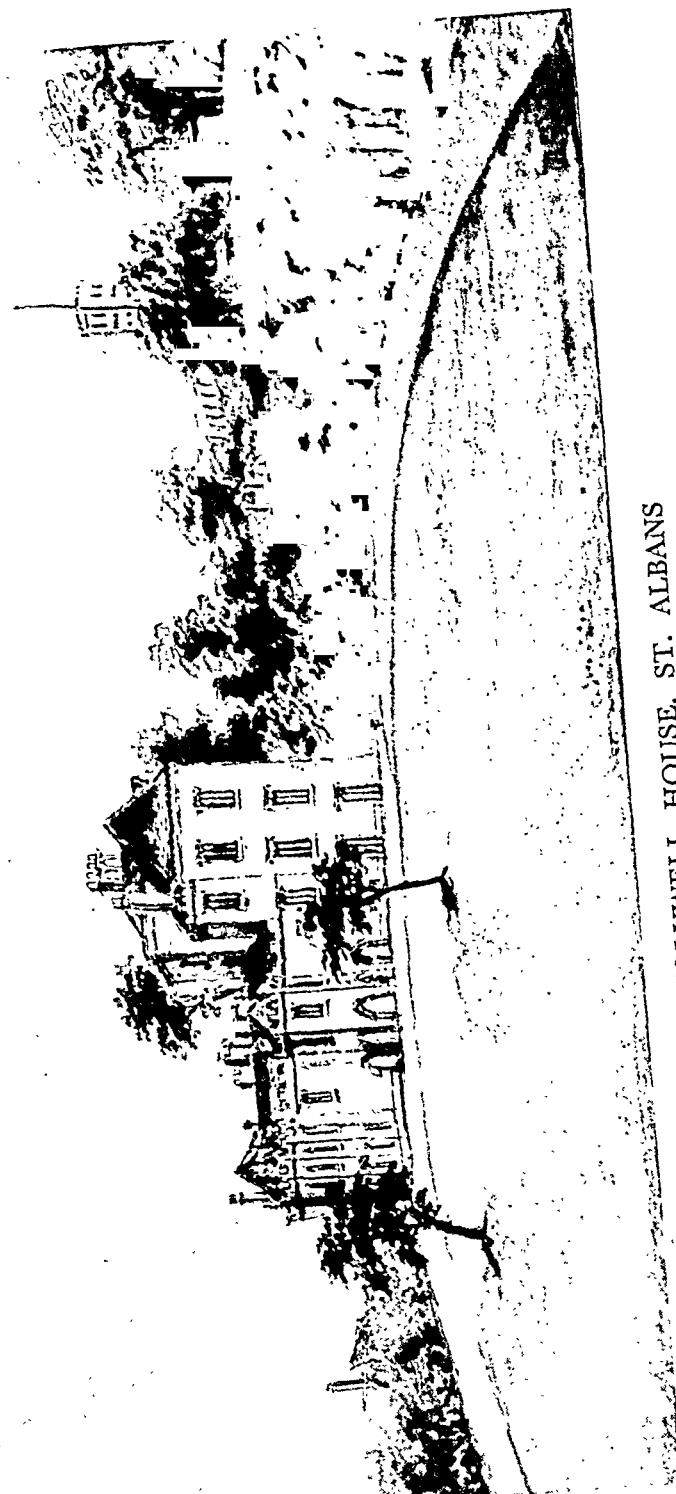
¹ Correspondence, 1838.

her cradle brought many gifts and splendid, but the gift of peace they did not bring

There were, or had been, many children in the three-gabled mullioned house that stood by the stream at Sandridge. There were two sons, and now there were three daughters. Barbara, the eldest, was twelve and Frances eight. They called the child Sarah, a gallant, uncompromising name oddly destined to be borne, in centuries to come, by two other women of notable gifts and character. Sarah, Duchess of Marlborough would have no need to disdain the company of Bernhardt and Mrs. Siddons. She was christened in the cathedral of St. Albans on June 17th. They found the lost registers of the cathedral in 1880 after 137 years and put an end to conjecture and inaccuracy, and also alibi, to the tradition which with true romantic and dramatic instinct would have had Duchess Sarah born on May 29th, the very day of the Restoration itself.

Of the early tranquil days we know nothing, for child psychology and the sayings of the children are products of a later age. Happy those days must have been, for the charity and self-confidence of later years could not, as we now know, have developed from a clouded childhood. If proof be needed, we may remember that Sandridge was for the Duchess a place of happy memories, so happy that when the inheritance came to be divided between her and her sisters, her husband, who had no joy greater than to give her pleasure, bought the whole of it, and built there for her the Holywell House which was so often to furnish her with a refuge from the tediums and excitements of court. A place of happy memories, too, it was for husband and wife, for the sun shining hotly upon the fields of Flanders in after years, brings to the mind of the Earl of Marlborough thoughts of the fruit ripening upon the walls of his garden at St. Albans, and he bids his beloved Sarah think how happy he would be there "walking alone with you."¹ The house did not survive those black years of the early nineteenth century when the voice of the Vandil was heard in the land and in 1827, with many another beautiful or historic building, it was pulled down to make way for one

¹ Letter, July 17th, 1702



HOLYWELL HOUSE, ST. ALBANS

From a water-colour in the British Museum

dares not conjecture what disasters in brick and mortar. But at the Restoration there was only Water End, and for the little girl playing in the garden or by the stream the days slipped by as they should, in the untroubled serenity of a childhood that leaves no recorded history. It was no remote, secluded or cloistered existence, though. News of the great world would come from London, from the palace of St. James' itself, where Frances the elder sister had gone in 1663 to be maid of honour to Anne Hyde, the first Duchess of York—tales of masque and ball, of banquet and river-party, all the diversions of a pleasure-loving court. Then came whispers of the plague and its growing terrors until the dreadful days of 1666 when the grass grew in the streets of London and in the silence the dead-cart went its ghastly rounds to the doors marked with a cross and a prayer. And after the pestilence that stalked at noon-day, there was the purification by fire when, as if to mark the beginnings of a new age, nine-tenths of mediaeval London was swept away, its very cathedral falling in flames to ruin. Charles the king played a gallant part then. No wonder they loved him, though their love was sorely tried when in the very next year enemy guns were heard in Kent itself, and on a certain shameful June 11th Dutch ships sailed up the Medway and burnt the shipping at Chatham. A blow to English pride this, and who could tell that, when Mr. Samuel Simmons gave £5 for a poem called *Paradise Lost* by a blind Roundhead he had done more for the age-long glory of England than any admiral? More to the taste of the Court and the maids of honour at that time was the boisterous wit of *Hudibras*, in which Samuel Butler poked bitter ribald fun at the Puritans who until so recently had added may-poles, plum-puddings, Morris-dancing, bell-ringing and many another pastime to the seven deadly sins. But poems, plagues, puritans and politics mattered very little to a child of eight, and these were but half-comprehended echoes that would reach Sandridge from St. James'. More poignant and immediate for little Sarah Jennings in 1668 was the death of a father. Tradition has it that a special love bound Richard Jennings and his youngest daughter, and why should we doubt it? A special intimacy and tenderness often

binds father and daughter, and Sarah as a child can never have been anything but intelligent and captivating. So the shadow of death fell early across her path, though she was mercifully too young fully to understand what she had lost. The household was broken up now, for her mother departed to the Court at St James' to share its gaieties with her daughter Frances, leaving Sarah alone at Water End to the care of servants, an arrangement ill calculated to foster qualities of discipline or self-control in a high-spirited child, or to inspire her with affection for a mother thus remote. Sarah was left, with what help we can only conjecture, to bring up and educate herself as best she might. The day of Lady Jane Grey and Queen Elizabeth was over, and that of the blue-stockings had not yet come. Lucy Apsley¹ or Margaret Blagge² or Susannah Evelyn might choose to employ their time over the classics, but the Restoration world required other and more mundane accomplishments from its young women—and usually got them. Enough if they learnt skill in saraband or coranto, or could do justice to the polished half-insolent grace of a court love-song from Sedley or Rochester, and hold their own in the brilliant butterfly life of jest and flirtation that fluttered and eddied round Whitehall palace. The daughter of a Royalist country squire would have no more education than was the custom for one of her quality. "The needle, dancing and the French tongue; a little music on the harpsichord and spinet; to read, write and cast accounts in a small way."³ Sarah's acquirements, it seems, did not even cover the whole of this dazzling curriculum, for we learn that in after-life she knew no French, and that her methods in arithmetic, though infallible, were unique, and in the highest degree original. Outside the confines of Sandridge higher educational flights might have been hers. At a boarding-school she would apparently have learnt "to dance, to sing, to play on the bass-viol, virginal, spinet and guitar—to make wax-work, jipin, paint on glass; to raise paste, to make sweetmeats and sauces and everything genteel and fashionable".⁴

¹ Afterwards Mrs Hutchinson

² Afterwards Mrs Godolphin

³ J. Ashton, *Social Life in the Reign of Queen Anne* 1882

⁴ *The Lady*—J. Ashton op. cit.

Perhaps we get nearer the truth in an educational catalogue of country lore. There are significant details in some of her letters which show the Duchess of Marlborough to have been a notable housewife, and indeed her practical thorough mind and amazing grasp of detail admirably fitted her for such an accomplishment. Maybe, like the lady in the play,¹ she learnt to "feed ducklings, cram chickens, see cows milked, to churn, to make cheese, to make a caraway cake, clouted cream and whip syllabubs—raise pie-crust—skill in syrups, sweetmeats, aqua-mirabilis and snayl-water", and acquired "great cunning in cheese-cakes, several creams and almond butter".

These are but conjectures, though scarcely extravagant ones. We do know, though, that in these early years she acquired, outside the merest rudiments, nothing of what those who lack it delight to call "book-learning". "Prithee," she said once, "do not talk to me of books. I know only men and cards." Not a bad equipment, to be sure, for her life of courtier and politician, but, lest her history be taken too hastily for a further proof of the superfluousness of education (especially for women), let us add here that few women would have profited by it more than she, and that it was the lack of those very qualities which education might have implanted which led her finally to sorrow and bitterness.

But the days went by untrammelled, broken only by occasional visits from her mother with tales of Frances and gay doings at Court. There is a story that on one of these visits Mrs. Jennings brought with her a visitor, a shy little girl four years younger than Sarah—a mere baby from Sarah's point of view. They said she was a princess—Princess Anne, and her mother died when she was only six. Poor little princess. Anyhow, whether they had met and played together before or not, Princess Anne and Mistress Sarah met and played in 1673 when Sarah's solitary free-lance life at Sandridge came to an end, and she left it for St. James' Palace to begin, at the age of thirteen, her novitiate in a life that was to be dedicated to courts for forty long years.

The little princess had an Italian step-mother that year—

¹ *The Scowlers.* ib.

very beautiful and very young, only two years older than her new friend Sarah Jennings. The Duke of York, her father, had presented her to them saying, "Here is a new play-fellow for you"; but poor fifteen-year old Mary Beatrice of Modena, her dreams of a convent shattered, alone in a strange land and met with hatred because of her religion, soon had other things to think of than play.

The children spent some time at Richmond, in what was left of the old palace there, in the hands of governesses and tutors, and it is reasonable to suppose that Sarah shared at least some of the instruction provided for the little princess she had come to play with. It was an odd education, if education it may be called at all. Drawing there was and French—though these seeds fell on very stony ground—dancing of course, and music. The guitar was then in fashion and lay on every polite toilet-table. Anne had a talent for the guitar, and those years were rich in exquisite songs. Its attenuated, feminine elegance did not chime with Sarah Jennings' vigorous vitality, though in later life she was constant in her love for music, orchestral and operatic.

But the *pièce de résistance* of this curriculum was selected by requirements neither intellectual nor artistic, but political—though they called it religious. What really mattered at that time was not that Anne and her elder sister Mary should possess any knowledge of history or literature, but that they should be securely bred in Protestantism, Defenders of the Faith from childhood. This was the ordinance of the politic Charles II. James had become a Catholic and induced his first duchess to follow him on her death-bed. His second duchess was Italian, Catholic, and *dévote* by temperament as well. Mary was heiress-presumptive, and after her Anne, and so, although it was reasonable to imagine that sons of the Duchess Mary Beatrice would come to the crown, the present position was such that an ostentatiously Protestant education for the next in succession might do much to allay the growing uneasiness in the country. Charles did the thing thoroughly. The bellicose Henry Compton, Bishop of London, was installed to instruct the princesses in the truths of the Church of England, and render them impervious to any

others. This prelate had distinguished himself by his attacks on popery, and having forsaken the calling of a soldier for that of a priest at the age of thirty, had brought to his new profession the vigour of his old, and become a veritable pillar of the church militant of England. He laboured in a fruitful soil, for Anne was easily dominated by a masterful personality and, while not capable of taking in many new ideas, was, with all the Stuart obstinacy, amazingly tenacious of the few she grasped, and what she did grasp firmly from Henry Compton, was that the Church of England must be supported against all attacks on it, if necessary even against her own kith and kin. This was no mere political tenet, either. Anne really loved the Church. She was simple and affectionate by temperament, needing something and someone to cling to, neither capable nor desirous of questioning the truth of what she was led to believe. Her like flourishes in many a little town and village to-day. Narrow, yes, and not very intelligent; yet the world is the better for them, and the destiny which perversely led Anne to a throne might more fittingly have made her the beloved lady of the manor and the idol of the vicarage.

Sarah, if she did not actually share the teachings of Compton, was their confidante, and there is no reason to suppose that the two girls were in anything but perfect agreement on these matters, for Sarah came from sturdy Royalist stock, and if she had not Anne's gift for piety, was at any rate of the independent unimaginative temperament to which the authority and mysticism of the Church of Rome would have but little appeal. Indeed by temperament she was far more alien to it than Anne, for in other hands Anne would have made an equally good Catholic—submissive, credulous, intellectually unadventurous and fond of forms and ceremonies. But Sarah, with her intellectual courage, her individuality, her scepticism, her materialism, her ruthless reasoning, could never have been anything but an enemy. She was not yet, however, at an age to do much else than follow the well-beaten track of family and political tradition. And so, for a time, these strangely dissimilar young minds followed the same path of devotion and loyalty to the established Church of their

country, strenuously led therein by the single minded, honest and courageous bishop

But it is not to be supposed that the educational regime at St James' Palace, neighbour to Whitehall, was restricted to hatred of popery and skill in the Thirty-nine Articles. Accomplishments more secular and, it must be confessed, more appropriate, were acquired by the young princesses and their friends. We have records of elocution lessons from no less a teacher than Mrs Betterton herself, wife of the great actor, Pepys' "Ianthe" and the *Lady Macbeth* of the seventeenth century. This lady was celebrated no less for her virtue than for her gifts, and unlike most of her professional sisters, does not figure in the *chroniques scandaleuses* of the time. Indeed her subsequent history is an eloquent testimony to her love for her husband, for grief at his death destroyed her reason. It is pleasant to know that in this time of trouble in 1710 Queen Anne remembered her old instructress and gave her a pension of £500 a year from which, alas, she only lived eighteen months to benefit. The lessons in elocution, destined by an ironical twist of fate to serve both Mary and Anne in the duties of queens regnant, were at this early careless time the prelude to nothing more momentous than court theatricals. Anne, not profusely endowed with graces, had one subtle and insidious charm—a low, sweet, musical voice, and if her constitutional shyness did not betray her, the Court was now to hear it in a masque, and Sarah Jennings, already distinguished by her beauty, vivacity and total absence of shyness, was to be in the masque too.

They were no new thing, these masques, but under the stern régime of the Commonwealth they had gone the way of stage plays and other diversions of the ungodly. Modern readers will find them best compared with revues, for they were pageants of costly mounting and elaborate stage mechanism held together by the slenderest of plots. Satire was no essential part of their element, though in productions by the Court for the Court, topical allusions would charm or amuse by their grace or malice. Unlike revues however, they often contained poetry, for in those happy times, when poets could often live by pleasing a royal taste, the road to

fame and fortune might well be through a masque. Shakespeare, always ready to follow a fashion, gave his audience a masque in *The Tempest*; Milton led it to breathe an unfamiliar and a purer air in *Comus*; and even the stern and erudite Ben Jonson stooped to conquer, and proved himself a master at this courtly art under the patronage of James I. For stage-manager he had no less than Inigo Jones, and more and more elaborate grew the productions, richer and richer the dresses and jewels under Charles I and his queen, until the glitter and pageantry were swept away by a more sombre drama whose final scene was played on a scaffold.

Now once again the curtain of the theatre at Whitehall rose on courtly masquers. *Calisto, or the Chaste Nymph* would suggest by its title that John Crowne, the author, had aimed at combining the classical and amorous conventions so much in fashion with the proprieties due, in the opinion of the Duchess of York, to the extreme youth of the performers. He had indeed to alter the script several times before it was finally considered suitable. Poor Crowne was very much harrassed over the whole affair, for not only was he unaccustomed to writing for *la jeune fille*, but he complains pathetically in the preface that he had had to write against time, and Mr. Staggins, responsible for the music, must have been even more pressed! Rochester it was who got Crowne his commission. Dryden, whose lovely *Secular Masque* shows what he might have done in this kind, had fallen out with Rochester, who took this further opportunity of paying off old scores, and Dryden only contributed the epilogue. The rehearsals went on for months, until the great day came on December 15th, 1677.

What a lot there had been to do! In addition to the chief characters, there were combatants, satyrs, winds, sea-gods, boys-in-the-clouds, all to be drilled and costumed. Nine pounds of whalebone they needed, at 20d. a pound, and prodigious quantities of canvas, calico, buckram, wire, fustian, tow, pasteboard, ribbons, buttons and laces, all colours, shapes and sizes. It was all very handsome, with cherry taffeta, silver fringes, sprigs of coral, and jewels of . . . tabby was not spared, and the tail of gold . . .

scarlet galoon runs into many a hundred yards. The accounts were worked out to a nicety. You could have four heavenly spirits for £2 12s. od.—which seems very reasonable. But perhaps the cost of living has gone up since then, for we find that Cupid himself was only £1 8s. 8d.

One only of the merry company was ill at ease. Mistress Margaret Blagge, whose destiny was to be so strangely woven with that of Mistress Sarah Jennings, told her friend John Evelyn that she looked upon the occasion as one of her greatest afflictions. Twenty thousand pounds' worth of jewels were on her costume. "She seemed to me," says Evelyn, "a saint in glory."¹ But Margaret's heart was not in these shows. Her dreams were of other worlds and heavenly kingdoms, and the jests of the green-room fell but jarringly on ears attuned to other discourses. "Her part," says Evelyn, "was sometimes to go off as the scenes required into the tiring room where several ladies her companions were railing with the gallants triflingly enough, till they were called to re-enter. She under pretence of conning her next part was retired into a corner reading a book of devotion."¹

Here is the cast:—

Calisto	.	.	.	Her Highness the Lady Mary
Nyphé	.	.	.	Her Highness the Lady Anne
Jupiter	.	.	.	Lady Henrietta Wentworth
Juno	.	.	.	The Countess of Sussex
Diana	.	.	.	Margaret Blagge
Peccas	.	.	.	The Lady Mary Mordaunt
Mercury	.	.	.	Sarah Jennings
Chief of the Dancers	.	.	.	The Duke of Monmouth

It is with an odd sadness that one reads these names—with more than the inevitable sigh that

"Queens have died young and fair,
Dust hath closed Helen's eyes."

For most of that gay and youthful company there was to be bitterness or tragedy beyond our common lot. For Margaret Blagge an untimely death after an all-too-short idyll of married

¹ *Life of Mrs. Godolphin.*

SARAH CHURCHILL AND THE PRINCESS ANNE

happiness. For Monmouth and Henrietta Wentworth a love which, defying law and constant in disaster, came to an end one terrible July morning in 1685 on Tower Hill and by the executioner's axe. A few months later, and Henrietta's broken heart followed her lover in death. Yet perhaps better love and death than life and hate. For death, when it came, found the Lady Mary at enmity with her own kin, and between the Lady Anne and Sarah Jennings there arose at the end a bitterness only to be measured by their love when they played together in *Calisto*.

CHAPTER III

THEY were gay years, those at St. James' and White-hall. No less a judge than the Comte de Grammont professed himself surprised at the politeness and splendour of the Court of England, and it is largely to his entertaining if irresponsible memoirs that we owe our knowledge of it. Mistress Sarah Jennings would have no need to complain of ennui. "The Court,"¹ says Grammont, "was variously entertained; sometimes there were promenades; at others the Court beauties sallied out on horseback (where they were observed in Hyde Park with pleasure and discrimination by the knowledgeable Mr. Pepys); at other seasons there were shows on the river. An infinite number of boats attended the barges in which were the royal family; collations, music and fireworks completed the scene." Add to this the balls, the masques, the plays, the visits to Tunbridge Wells or Newmarket, the ceremonies and pageantries for great nobles or foreign envoys, and you have enough to please the most insatiable débutante, the youngest and gayest maid-of-honour. Under Charles II dullness was the only crime, seriousness the only misdemeanour, wit, beauty and high spirits the passports to favour. Conversation was raised once more to the level of an art, and talk brilliant and ephemeral as the fireworks themselves flashed from king to courtier and from gallant to lady. Flirtations and intrigue were in the air. Love-making became a science, and few there were who failed to graduate. Fidelity was out of fashion, and, as Grammont observes, many were distinguished by their amours, but few by their constancy. Wrote Sir John Suckling:—

" Out upon it, I have loved
Three whole days together;
And am like to love three more.
If it prove fair weather."

¹ *Mémoirs*

Boredom had at all costs to be kept at bay, and the Court fluttered after amusement as Charles, accomplished and profligate, astute and treacherous, graceful and indolent, chased a moth in the rooms of *la belle Stuart*. This was the dazzling, cynical and corrupt life to which Sarah Jennings was introduced in early girlhood when, from playmate to the Princess Anne, she was promoted to maid-of-honour to Mary of Modena.

There was co-operation rather than rivalry between the courts of Whitehall and St. James', and to be free of the one was to command the entree to the other. Neither the young Duchess of York, with her Catholic piety, nor Catherine of Braganza, with her "six frights" as maids-of-honour, could do very much to check the prevailing tone of elegant flippancy, though religion, which was seldom mentioned except in jest at Whitehall, came soon to be a matter of ominous moment at St. James', and the wild extravagances of Charles' Court were not imitated in that of his less intelligent and slightly morose brother. Still, it was gay enough for a girl of fifteen, and Sarah, if she needed any further introduction than her own vivid personality, found that the name of Jennings was already linked with qualities of wit and beauty. The Duchess of York prided herself on the loveliness of her maids-of-honour, and from amongst them Sarah's sister Frances had won the title of *la belle Jennings*. Grammont, whose standard was high, waxes lyrical in her praise, comparing her with Aurora herself from her bright hair and dazzling complexion. Merry and high-spirited she was as well as beautiful, radiating vitality—a true sister to Sarah. Her exploit with Mistress Price is chronicled with admiring relish by Pepys—how to visit a fortune-teller (probably the Earl of Rochester in disguise) they dressed as orange-girls and set out in a coach, how they planned to go to the playhouse and sell oranges, and how, finding themselves treated according to their disguise, Frances betrayed herself by her indignation, and with difficulty they got back to the palace. To beauty and wit Frances joined a rarer quality at court—virtue. Grammont, who was an artist in scandal and can never be suspected of giving anyone the benefit of the doubt, says that she was "the ornament of the

SARAH, DUCHESS OF MARLBOROUGH

court by her attractions and its example by her conduct". Being virtuous at St. James' was, at that time, something more than a negative accomplishment, and Frances was beckoned down the primrose path by no less a person than his Royal Highness himself. James' mistresses were usually so ugly that Charles declared they must be given him by his priests as a penance, but on this occasion at least, he attempted to change his habits. The account of his siege of Frances is amusing. He ogled her, he waylaid her, he deluged her with billets doux. Frances ignored it all, and when his tender expressions and magnificent promises were slipped into her pockets or her muff she shook them from her "like hailstones" and they lay about the floor for all to read. Prince or commoner, 'twas all the same to Mistress Frances if their conduct did not please her, and they say she was "haughty beyond description once she took it into her head". Beautiful, gay, witty, proud and intractable—is it one sister we are describing or the other? The words would have served for both. But their roads were to lie far apart in later years for Frances became a Catholic,¹ and finally² threw in her lot with lying Dick Talbot, who became Duke of Tyrconnel and Viceroy of Ireland, and left a widow, followed her mistress and her rejected lover into exile and formed one of the melancholy shadow-court at St. Germain.

But the storm clouds had scarcely begun to gather as yet, and the two Miss Jennings were for a few more years to adorn St. James' with their beauty, entertain it with their wit and surprise it by their virtue. For Sarah, at sixteen, was very lovely too—tall, slender, with a small head exquisitely set upon its slim neck and crowned with masses of silken, honey-coloured hair, a mobile face in whose vivid dark blue eyes set wide apart the changing moods were mirrored, and a complexion so fair that it might have been the cheek sung by the Rev. Mr. Crashaw³:

"where grows
More than a morning rose,
Which to no box his being owes."

¹ Evelyn's Diary, Nov. 1673.

² She first married Sir George Hamilton.

³ 1613-1649 To his (supposed) Mistress

Truly a maid attractive enough to work havoc among the highly susceptible gallants of that highly susceptible court. But intense independence, a quick temper, a sharp tongue and a great fastidiousness were also Mistress Sarah's, and armed with these she went her self-contained way with safety. They say that James turned his attention to her also, and got very short shrift. It is like enough. That he was not the only one is hinted by a little fragment of paper that has survived from these years, and from its contents seems scarcely to have been written to the lover who became her husband. "Your impertinent reflexions of my fine shape," it runs, "could provoke me extremely but that you are miserable and so I am revenged." The conjectured context must, however, be accepted with caution since it is difficult to see why the Duchess should, years after, have kept the note and even transcribed it. Indeed, to anyone ignorant of her character Mistress Sarah might have seemed an easy prey for her face was her only fortune, her grandfather having left twenty-four children and her father's estate, not in itself very large, had to be shared with her brothers and sisters. But her beauty and charm brought many suitors, though she would have none of them. Coxe mentions the Earl of Lindsay amongst the aspirants, and a libel written in later and troublous years, while attacking the Duchess on every count conceivable and inconceivable, nevertheless admits that in her youth she had no lack of suitors and was indeed "the star and ornament of the court". So she went her arrogant way, tossing her lovely head at rich and titled wooers, as if she had the world to choose from instead of being the portionless daughter of a plain country squire. Perhaps it was this that precipitated the quarrels with her mother in 1676. The figure of Mrs. Jennings is oddly mysterious. Grammont, with an insatiable appetite for scandal and no great aversion to lying, has thrown out hints against her character. These it seems safe enough to disregard, for a MS. letter addressed to the Duchess by a family friend from St. Albans refers to "your noble mother", and we know she had lodgings in St. James' Palace under the protection of the Duke and Duchess of York, though, according to a contemporary, they served her as a kind of sanctuary for

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debt. But if debt be a crime there will be many criminals, and we have evidence which seems to throw doubts even on this accusation, for she apparently left the palace when she chose and, far from being insolvent, subsequently made a will leaving everything to her daughter Sarah "for her sole and separate use". Finally, it may be noted that in one of her wills the Duchess disposes of Agnes Court, Kent, the property of her mother, which must have come to her thus. But the malice of Grammont was afterwards to furnish political scandal-mongers with materials for their libels on the Duchess, and in the scurrilous pages of *The New Atalantis* her mother figures under the vilest of characters.

Since, however, no lie was too fantastic for the venial pen of Rivella¹ we need not treat her sensational garbage with anything but the contempt it deserves. That Mrs Jennings' relations with her independent self-willed daughter were not of the smoothest is plain enough from a letter written in 1676 by Lady Chaworth² which reads, "Mrs Jennings and her daughter have had so great a falling out that they fought, the young one complained to the Duchess that if her mother was not put out of St James' she would run away, so Sir Allen Apsley³ was sent to bid the mother remove, who answered, with all her heart. She would never dispute the Duke and Duchess' commands, but with the grace of God would take her daughter away with her. So rather than part with her the mother must stay and all breaches are made up again". But the truce was short lived, and little wonder, for in the reported answer of Mrs Jennings do we not hear the note of quick-tempered defiance—the very accents of Sarah herself? A month later renewed hostilities had ended in a victory for the determined and passionate young daughter and Lady Chaworth chronicles among other Court gossip "Mrs Sarah Jennings has got the better of her mother who is commanded to leave the Court, and her daughter in it notwithstanding the mother's petition that she might have her girl with her, the girl saying she is a mad woman".

¹ Mrs Manley auth. rev. of *The New Atalantis*.

² Rutland MSS. HMC.

³ Comptroller to the Duke of York and brother to Sir H. A. see

⁴ A courtesy title given to young women of good reput.

was it all about? The Rutland MS. suggests that Mrs. Jennings felt nervous at the increasing laxity of the Court. Was she frightened by Frances' recent conversion to Popery? Would Sarah not marry any of the eligible *partis*? We shall never know, and conjecture is unprofitable. The years of neglect had borne their fruit and the clash of two imperious wills was inevitable. The portrait of Mrs. Jennings by Kneller that hangs at Althorp shows a face full of character and determination, marked by strength rather than grace. Sarah's mother would seem to have possessed some of Sarah's sterner qualities, though not, apparently, her charm. She left St. James' then, in a flurry of rage and her daughter remained there, free now once more even from the shadow of parental control, and having learnt already that she could get her own way if she tried. The breach was healed in later years for the will refers to "my dear daughter Sarah", and Mrs. Jennings died in 1693 before the full blaze of publicity had been turned upon the Countess of Marlborough. But for our purposes she passes out of the Duchess' life at this time, though to return long afterwards, a bitter ghost, speaking with the lips of the Duchess' own daughter.

Left to her own devices, Sarah was free to amuse herself with all the distractions of a merry court, and the friendship with Princess Anne grew apace. Anne, shy and inarticulate, became more and more devoted to Sarah, who was so amusing, so strong, so brave and so dependable. She loved her sister Mary too, and felt that she and Mary were somehow united by all this frightening talk about Catholics and their father and step-mother, and must stand by each other; but Mary had a special friend of her own, Elizabeth Villiers, so the quartet tended to divide itself, though Mary and Sarah were good enough friends. Soon there was something to talk about more exciting than popery and that concerned them more nearly. Once more political expediency was to play the part sometimes allotted to an even higher power, and a marriage was arranged. Charles had again taken a hand. The Protestant cause in Europe was being championed with desperate courage by the young Stadtholder of Holland, William of Orange, Mary's own cousin. He had visited Whitehall in 1670, a reserved

silent youth of nineteen, uncouth, asthmatic, and very intelligent. Now, after some preliminary and not very courteous negotiations, he decided that his cause against France would be best served by an alliance with the Protestant heiress presumptive of England, the Princess Mary of York. Charles' secret treaties with France were undreamed of by his people and by most of his own Ministers, who still probably counted on sons from James. (The Duchess of York was even then expecting a child.) He perceived that here was a match that would prove popular at home and serve to cover still further his Catholic leanings. Also, he was when he liked a shrewd judge of men and, not repelled by a complete lack of all the graces wherein he himself excelled, he seems to have penetrated William's boorish exterior and divined the strength, statesmanlike qualities and unusual abilities of the young man. "He is," he said, "the honestest man in the world. I will trust him; he *shall* have his wife."¹ So Mary's destiny, after the manner of royal destinies, was arranged for her, and any dreams she might have had were shattered on October 21st, 1677, when, we are told by her tutor, Dr. Lake, "the Duke of York dined at Whitehall and after dinner came to St. James'. He led his eldest daughter Mary into her closet and told her of the marriage destined between her and the Prince of Orange. Whereupon her highness wept all the afternoon and all the following day".² Poor Mary had but little time to weep, for her wedding was on November 4th when, in a private room in St. James' Palace, that staunch Protestant champion Bishop Compton doubtless made all the customary remarks about the sanctity of marriage and the romance of love at first sight. Anne was not there, for she was ill with small-pox which was raging at St. James'; and such was the love between them, that they did not dare tell her of her sister's departure when on November 19th the wind blew fair for Holland and Mary sailed away from Gravesend with her Dutch William. The prologue had been spoken.

Anne recovered from her small-pox, but Lady Frances Villiers died and was succeeded in the post of governess by the princess' aunt Lady Clarendon, a lady whose abilities

¹ *Memoranda of Sir William Temple*

² *Diary*

frivolity and intimidating though sterling moral qualities were unrelieved by personal charm. The Duchess was afterwards to describe her with caustic pen as "a lady whose discourse and manner, though the princess thought they went well enough together, could not possibly recommend her to so young a mistress, for she looked like a madwoman and talked like a scholar."¹

With Mary gone and a governess she disliked, Anne depended more and more on Sarah for companionship and sympathy. But Sarah, though she seems to have given much of her time to the not very exciting young princess and to have been content enough to drift idly down the shallow stream of Court gossip and amusement, was now to be swept into deeper waters. "Heart-whole and soul-free" she had been till now, mocking perhaps at passions to which she was as yet a stranger. We have nothing but untrustworthy gossip as to how she first met young Colonel Churchill. It was certainly at St. James' for, though then only twenty-six, he was Master of the Robes to the Duke of York, and was in attendance in 1676-1677. Later tradition had it that it was at a ball² that his grace and skill first attracted her and her beauty and wit first captivated him; but it does not very much matter, for Colonel Churchill's fame and favour at St. James' rested on qualities more striking than excellence in saraband or pavan. He had already distinguished himself on the battlefield both by personal courage and military skill, earning the commendation of Turenne and, by a dramatic irony, saving the life of the Duke of Monmouth.³ But there must have been many officers at Whitehall and St. James' skilled in dance and warfare, and young Colonel Churchill must needs have eclipsed them all, else had the fortress of Mistress Sarah Jennings' heart remained untaken. Indeed it was to no common parts she surrendered, to no mere silken courtier, no dazzle of easily-won renown. The high gods had been generous to John Churchill and endowed him not only with gifts that won him admiration, but with qualities that won

¹ *Conduct.*

² *History of Zarah.*

³ He afterwards assisted to defeat him at the battle of Sedgmoor.

him love. He was a courtier among courtiers, and his personal beauty and finished elegance were notable even in that brilliant company; but beyond these he held, supremely, that talisman that opens so many doors, that last and greatest gift so precious, so potent and so unattainable—the gift of charm. And in him it was neither a shallow trick of politeness nor a simple magnetism of vitality—for both sometimes masquerade successfully as charm—it was innate in his character, and as natural as the air he breathed. It had its roots deep in gentleness, in humanity, in sensitiveness, not merely in outward polish. He could, they said afterwards, refuse a request with more grace than another could grant it, and in him good manners were as they should be, a moral quality and, as the old motto put it, *made the man*. As stern a judge as Lord Chesterfield declared his bearing “irresistible”, and held him as a pattern.¹ To the graces and charm of youth he added, even at this time, qualities so often attainable only by age (and seldom even then)—a calm serenity of temper that remained for ever outwardly unruffled, a complete self-control and an inexhaustible patience in the face of folly, stupidity or injury. Perhaps the balance was too perfect. Perhaps a little generous folly might not have been amiss in this preternaturally self-contained and wise young man who seemed to have anticipated the consolations and advantages of age by sacrificing something of the divine absurdity and rapturous unreason of youth. But in 1676 he met Sarah Jennings, and prudence, wisdom, self-control and all the rest of it went to the winds and he fell in love as hopelessly, as ardently and as deeply as the most exacting and unreasonable romanticist could desire. Of the courtship that followed we have but fragmentary accounts, though enough to give us an insight into its nature. It is not to be supposed that Sarah was easily won. As if in instinctive recoil from a thralldom from which there would be no escape, unwilling to be a prisoner, even to love, she fought with all the strength of her character and all the bitterness of her tongue, against the enemy that threatened her, and fought the harder because she knew her heart was traitor. Pride may have had something to do with it too, for

¹ Letters to his son.

although it all happened before she came to court there would be many to tell her the story of John Churchill's affair with Barbara Palmer, Duchess of Cleveland, the loveliest and most wanton of Charles II's mistresses. Sarah, young and stern, would of course be quite incapable of seeing the momentary passion of a young man for a woman as beautiful as Barbara Palmer in its true light, and moreover, the Duchess was still at Court. There was also the matter of £5,000 she had given him and which, with a prudence beyond his years, he had invested in an annuity. So, although her heart had gone from her keeping, Mistress Sarah kept her head and treated Colonel Churchill with an aloofness she was far from feeling. Archdeacon Coxe's description of her as "coy", however, strikes an odd note. Sarah was no early Victorian miss. She had few of the qualities deemed desirable in 1818—and coyness was not amongst her accomplishments. If she seemed to discourage Colonel Churchill, the reason should be sought deeper than in mere flirtatiousness. Discourage him she did, as the fragmentary notes that remain from this period show clearly. There are not many. The Duchess, with the sensitive reticence she always displayed in this her deepest and most sacred experience, insisted on all her letters to her husband being destroyed as soon as they were read, and living under one roof as they were at this early time, there was little need for letters; so only a few notes remain. But may we use them? There is so much in modern life and letters that would be improved by a little reticence—not to say decency. We are all so anxious to wear our hearts and the hearts of others upon our sleeves, and even the crude publicity of newspapers sometimes finds us ready and willing. Shall we be violating the reserve and privacy in which Sarah of Marlborough elected to keep her most intimate memories? Nothing is more moving or more significant in her life than the way in which she, the most fearlessly outspoken of women, guarded the secrets of her life with the man she loved. On every other personal subject she was often too ready to pour herself out; but on this supreme subject her silence was inviolable, as was also her husband's. It is therefore almost with a feeling of intrusive vulgarity that we approach these relics intended for

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no eyes but those which first read them. In her will the Duchess left these letters to Grace Ridley, her trusted woman-in-waiting, with a request that she should burn without reading them; but it is probable that Mrs. Ridley never obtained possession of them and that they passed with many hundreds of other manuscript packets into the hands of her executors and have so survived.

But we may perhaps plead—it is all far away and long ago. The dust of John Churchill and of Sarah his wife has lain sleeping these two centuries, and it is sometimes good that the knowledge of things notable or beautiful should be added to the store of our human experience. And in the tale of their love there is nothing but good and fair, nothing but what may delight and comfort us—delight us by the quality of its lovely romance and comfort us by its depth and endurance.

A distinguished critic¹ once said of love-letters that they could only be original at the price of being monstrous. That is probably true of most of them, but it must also be remembered that the pen which robs many of utterance, leading them to the stereotyped image and the slip-shod phrase, in the hands of others will unlock the heart. John Churchill and Sarah Jennings were no ordinary lovers, and the Colonel needed the eloquence that love gave him. It was a long and ardent siege, for with what reasons we can only guess, Miss Jennings, if we only judge by her letters, dealt him rebuff after rebuff. His letters were unanswered and sometimes even unread. He writes—"If you are unkind, I love so well that I cannot live, for you are my life, my soul, my all that I hold dear in this world; therefore do not make so ungrateful a return as not to write. If you have charity, you will not only write but write kindly, for it is on you that depends the quiet of my soul. Had I fitting words to express my love, it would not then be in your power to refuse what I beg with tears in my eyes, that you would love me as I by heaven, do you."²

" . . . Ah, my soul, if you loved so well as I" (in another letter) "you could never have refused my letter so barbarously."

¹ The late Sir Walter Scott.

² The original of this and other letters has been preserved by the author.

as you did, for if reason had bade you do it, love would never have permitted it." He attends the drawing-rooms of the Duke, in spite of "excessive headache" (to which he was always subject) as so to catch a glimpse of her. But Sarah, if not coy, was uncertain and hard to please. "I cannot remember what it is I said that you take so ill," he writes pathetically, and complains of her going contemptuously from him in the Duchess' drawing-room.

Imaginative biography is an irritating affair. Sentences like those beginning "Shakespeare, standing outside the Mermaid Tavern would very probably have caught a glimpse of Ben Jonson" justly annoy the judicious reader. But there comes a moment when possibilities or probabilities must be reckoned with, if we are to present anything more than a series of unrelated facts. There must have been some reason why Sarah Jennings treated the proffered love of Colonel Churchill with such calculated scorn. The love between them must have had its birth now, but why should she deny it, and try to kill it, in herself no less than in him?

It is very difficult, in view of some of the expressions in Sarah's letters, to put aside the possibility that what John Churchill first proposed to Miss Jennings was not marriage. He loved her truly enough without doubt, but we must remember that this was the Restoration, and Sarah would not have been the first maid-of-honour to favour a gallant courtier. None of the Duchess' biographers have ventured to this conclusion. Yet it is difficult to see what other interpretation can be put upon these phrases:—"If it were true that you have that passion for me which you say you have, you would find out some way to make yourself happy. It is in your power, therefore press me no more to see you since 'tis what I cannot in honour allow of". Again, in another letter: "Pray, consider if with honour to me and satisfaction to yourself I can see you. . . . 'Tis to no purpose to imagine that I will be made ridiculous in the world when it is in your power to make me otherwise". And again, later: "If your intentions are honourable, and what I have reason to expect, you need not fear my sister's coming can make any change in me, or that it is in the power of anyone to alter me except yourself".

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¹ The late Sir Walter Raleigh.

² The spelling of this and other letters has been moderated throughout.

even amongst the profligates and wits of Charles' court, and his daughter had inherited a measure of both. Wealth and wit had to content her though, for beauty she had none, and she would jest brilliantly at her own ugliness, greatly to the amusement of Charles II who found himself much diverted by her conversation, which was apparently more entertaining than delicate. "None of the most virtuous, but a wit," said Evelyn. So it was to Catharine Sedley, ugly, rich, lax and amusing, that John Churchill was invited to turn his attention, and forget the portionless Sarah Jennings with her flame-like beauty and purity. But Sarah was cold and Catharine perhaps was willing—and for a moment he wavered. Then indeed had Sarah a reason for retreat, and she used it to the full.

She left even the Duchess' drawing-room when he entered it, she accused him of slighting her, she refused to believe his protestations of love. He was going to marry "a shocking creature for money". "As for seeing you," she wrote, "I am resolved I never will in private nor in public if I could help it. As for the last I fear it will be some time before I can order so as to be out of your way of seeing me." The love as well as the pride of sixteen-years-old was wounded. She had given him her heart and he had seemed, for a moment, to hold it lightly. "Surely," she goes on, "you must confess you have been the falsest creature upon earth to me. I must own that I believe I shall suffer a great deal of trouble, but I will bear it and give God thanks, though too late I see my error." She proposed to go to Paris to her sister Lady Hamilton. Faced with the actual losing of her, John Churchill realised that all Catharine's thousands mattered not a jot. He never thought of her again and redoubled his pleading, to regain the ground he had lost with Sarah.

"I will not, dearest," he wrote, "ask or hope to hear from you, unless your charity pities me, and will so far plead for me as to tell you that a man dying for you may hope you will be so kind as to make a distinction between him and the rest of his sex. I do love and adore you with all my heart and soul so much that by all that is good I do and ever will be better pleased with your happiness than my own. I will not dare to expect more favour than you shall think fit

It may also be noticed in this connection how in a letter after their marriage he writes: "I swear to you that if we were not married I would beg you on my knees to be my wife, which I could not do did I not esteem you as well as love you".

If this should have been the case (though we cannot treat it as more than a theory) it would explain a great deal of Sarah's resistance, the violence of which it is not otherwise easy to account for. Her treatment of Churchill was something more than merely the rejection of a girl, even a hot-tempered uncontrolled girl, of her lover, and we must beware of reading into her youth too much of what we know about the Duchess' violences in her old age. We may be wrong. There may be another explanation of the letters which their fragmentary condition conceals, but the theory seems just possible enough for it to be necessary to state it.

There were, in any case, other reasons why Mistress Jennings should hold herself aloof from Colonel Churchill, be his proposals never so honest. We know that Sir Winston and Lady Churchill opposed the match. Sarah had only her looks and her charm, and there had been trouble at court about her mother. Young Colonel Churchill had the favour of the Duke and very great personal gifts. But he was poor and as the old song puts it "for lack of money he might not speed". It was obviously his duty to his family to make a rich marriage, and he who had captured the fancy of Barbara, Duchess of Cleveland, might hope for much in the marriage market. This was too true to be palatable to a young girl of high spirit and intense pride, and it does not seem fantastic to conclude that Sarah Jennings was *unwilling to consider* entering a family to which she would be unwelcome, and therefore did her best to stifle her own feelings and discourage her suitor. But later on affairs took on a still more serious aspect. Colonel Churchill, perhaps feeling that the whole affair was hopeless, and that Sarah would never yield to him or ignore the opposition of his family, began to listen to their proposals. One cannot admire their cynical wisdom in the choice of a daughter-in-law. The lady selected was Catharine Sedley, daughter of Sir Charles Sedley, and heiress to his wealth. Sir Charles was noted for his profligacy and wit

in her power to help on the match between her maid-of-honour and her husband's favourite. She offered to settle money on Sarah, an offer which that independent young lady would have refused but for Churchill's wishes. So closely bound up with the affair was the Duchess that she and she alone was in their confidence, and it was in her actual presence that, early in 1678, Colonel John Churchill wedded Sarah Jennings and began another chapter in the long story of the love between these two that only death itself was to end.

to give, but could you ever love me I think the happiness would be so great it would make me immortal

Before this impassioned pleading even Sarah's resolution began to weaken, and when Colonel Churchill sent by her maid a note in which he declares that if he cannot have her love he will not have her pity, but will never trouble her more, she unbent sufficiently to allow him to come once more and plead his cause

"You have reason to think it strange that I write to you after my last," she wrote, "when I professed that I would never write or speak to you more, but as you know how much kindnesses I had from you, you can't wonder or blame me if I try once more to hear what you can say for your justification"

The figure of Catharine Sedley continued to haunt her, and she found it impossible at first to regain her faith in her lover "If I had as little love as you," she tells him, "I have been told enough about you to make me hate you," and she adds with a touch of pathos, "and then I believe I should be more happy than I am like to be now"

Churchill, however, succeeded in persuading her to give him a week in which to plead his cause in person, and at the end of that time his passion broke down the last of Mistress Sarah's defences and she consented to an engagement, though for the moment they did not propose to make it public

After this there is little to chronicle, though Sarah still had her moods of perverseness and her lover's path was far from being roses all the way She was exacting, and her pen, like her tongue, was incisive "At four o'clock I would see you," she writes, "but that would hinder you from seeing the play, which I fear would be a great affliction to you and increase the pain in your head which it would be out of anybody's power to ease till the next new play" We have no record of anything but unwearied devotion on Churchill's side He hunts the balls, the opera, the drawing-rooms to catch a glimpse of her We hear of him sending her puppies—"if you give it warm milk it will not die"—he is careful of her health and he is "only truly happy" when he is with her They had an ally in the young Duchess of York, who did all

in her power to help on the match between her maid-of-honour and her husband's favourite. She offered to settle money on Sarah, an offer which that independent young lady would have refused but for Churchill's wishes. So closely bound up with the affair was the Duchess that she and she alone was in their confidence, and it was in her actual presence that, early in 1678, Colonel John Churchill wedded Sarah Jennings and began another chapter in the long story of the love between these two that only death itself was to end.

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The figure of Catharine Sedley continued to haunt her, and she found it impossible at first to regain her faith in her lover. "If I had as little love as you," she tells him, "I would have been told enough about you to make me hate you," and adds with a touch of pathos, "and then I believe I would be more happy than I am like to be now."

Churchill, however, succeeded in persuading her to give him a week in which to plead his cause in person, and at the end of that time his passion broke down the last of Sarah's defences and she consented to an engagement, though for the moment they did not propose to make it public.

After this there is little to chronicle, though Sarah still has her moods of perverseness and her lover's path was far from being roses all the way. She was exacting, and her power over her tongue, was incisive. "At four o'clock I would see you," she writes, "but that would hinder you from seeing the play which I fear would be a great affliction to you and it would be the pain in your head which it would be out of any power to ease till the next new play." We have no record of anything but unwearied devotion on Churchill's side. Sarah still haunts the balls, the opera, the drawing-rooms to catch a glimpse of her. We hear of him sending her puppy when you give it warm milk it will not die"—he is careful of his health and he is "only truly happy" when he is with Sarah. They had an ally in the young Duchess of York, who did

in her power to help on the match between her maid-of-honour and her husband's favourite. She offered to settle money on Sarah, an offer which that independent young lady would have refused but for Churchill's wishes. So closely bound up with the affair was the Duchess that she and she alone was in their confidence, and it was in her actual presence that, early in 1678, Colonel John Churchill wedded Sarah Jennings and began another chapter in the long story of the love between these two that only death itself was to end.

CHAPTER IV

THE marriage was to be kept a secret, the obvious reason being the opposition of Sir Winston and Lady Churchill and this was the easier since in April Colonel Churchill, whose diplomatic genius was already recognised by both Charles and James, was sent to Holland on a mission to the Prince of Orange. A letter from him written from Brussels is addressed to "Miss Jennings", and was long after endorsed by the Duchess: "I believe I was married when this letter was writ but it was not known to any but the Duchess."¹ The secret however, was not to be kept for long, for in the summer Colonel Churchill returned home and his parents, wisely deciding to endure what could not be cured, even a portionless daughter-in-law, received their son and his bride into their home at Mintern, and the next few months of Sarah's wedded life were spent in the peace and beauty of Dorsetshire which would provide for lovers newly-wed, a happier setting than the crowded gaieties and petty distractions of a court. We do not know how young Mrs. Churchill emerged from this ordeal—for ordeal it must have been. Coxe tells us that she "reconciled" her mother- and father-in-law to their son's most imprudent marriage and we will hope it is true. The wit and charm that had shone at St. James' might have been employed to good advantage at Mintern. Sarah had already shown fairly clearly that she was not disposed to put up with persons or situations she found irksome, so as she remained some time at Mintern it may be that all went well. But the happy time together was interrupted all too soon and Churchill was once more called away, this time to take command of his brigade in Flanders. He wrote to her by every post—letters which one imagines would have moved any woman. " . . .

¹ of York.

Popish plots and gained wealth and notoriety at the price of much innocent blood. The murder of Sir Edmund Berry Godfrey, the magistrate before whom Oates had first made his depositions, increased the nervous terror of the people, and no story was too fantastic to be told and believed against the Catholics. The Duchess of York's own secretary was executed. The ghost of Godfrey was said to have appeared at mass and even maidservants were suspected of having set fire to their masters' houses.¹ Charles did the wisest thing. He sent his brother out of England, and in March, 1679, the Duke and Duchess of York, with Colonel and Mrs Churchill in their suite, embarked for Holland, and after a long and stormy passage arrived at the Hague and finally settled in Brussels, where in August they were joined by Anne and her baby half-sister Isabella. Sarah could now once more take up the thread of her friendship with the princess, hear the latest Whitehall scandals, and tell Anne how badly William of Orange was treating her sister Mary, how he neglected her, tyrannised over her, and was unfaithful to her with Elizabeth Villiers, and how, strangely enough, Mary seemed to be becoming positively fond of him. Anne would have terrible tales to tell of Catholic intrigues, for she was still as firm as ever in her devotion to the Church of England and had her own chaplain at Brussels and a place assigned to her for Church of England services.

A hurried dash to Windsor on a report of Charles' illness enabled James to win permission to transfer his exile from Holland to Scotland where, in the event of Charles' death and an attempted seizure of the throne by the illegitimate Monmouth, he would at least not risk being at the mercy of contrary winds. So on October 7th he and the Duchess arrived at the Hague and supped with the Prince and Princess of Orange, and next day James took a farewell of his daughter Mary which was destined to be his last, for he never saw her again. The passage was stormy, and it was not until the evening of October 12th that they finally arrived at St James'. But feeling in England against the Catholics in general and the Duke of York in particular was so bitter that Charles

¹ A Luttrell Narration of Sir A. A. 11

dared not allow the royal party to remain, and within a fortnight the weary pilgrimage had to begin all over again, this time with a road journey to Edinburgh. Colonel Churchill of course had to go north too, but this time his wife was unable to accompany him, for she was awaiting a child. So on October 27th, 1679, the lovers had to part again, and Colonel Churchill went north with a heavy and an anxious heart, for childbirth in those days was even more dangerous than it is at present. His wife he left in the care of her sister Frances, now the widow of Sir George Hamilton, in lodgings in Jermyn Street. As before, he wrote by every post. "I hope in God," he writes from York, "that I shall hear you are safe and out of all danger, which news I long for most extremely, for believe me upon my soul, you are dearer to me than ever you were. I love you so well that I desire life no longer than you love me and I love you. Pray, when you are not able to write yourself make somebody or other write so that I may constantly know how you do." "Although I believe you love me," he says in another letter, "yet you do not love as well as I, so that you cannot be truly sensible how much I desire to be with you . . . for if ever man loved woman truly well, I now do you, for I swear to you that if we were not married I would beg you on my knees to be my wife, which I could not do did I not esteem you as well as love you."

Biographers of the Duchess, with light-hearted inaccuracy, have usually assumed the child now born to be her eldest daughter Henrietta. This they have been enabled to do by ignoring the date at the head of a letter written in January 1679 by her husband and, apparently with clear consciences, quoting it as if it belonged to the year 1682.

This letter reads:

Jan. 3, 1679,—I writ to you last night by the express, and since that I have no good news to send you. The yachts are not yet come, nor do we know when they will, for the wind is directly against them, so that you may believe that I am not in a very good humour since I desire nothing so much as being with you. The only comfort I had here was hearing from you, and now if we should be stopped by

contrary winds and not hear from you you may guess with what satisfaction I shall pass my time; therefore as you love me you will pray for fair winds, so that we may not stay here nor be long at sea. I hope all the red spots of our child will be gone against I see her, and her nose strait, so I may fancy it to be like the mother; for as she has your coloured hair, I would have her be like you in all things else. Till next post-day farewell. By that time I hope we shall hear of the yachts, for till I do I shall have no kind of patience.

Unless the date on this letter is an error, which is not in the least likely, this must refer to a child born in Churchill's absence in Scotland in this early winter of 1679. It must be remembered that January 1679 old style, would be January, 1680, new style, the old style new year not beginning till March, but by no juggling can the letter refer to Henrietta, the entry of whose baptism exists in the registers of St. Martin's in the Fields for July, 1681. The child now born cannot have survived long enough for baptism, for its name does not appear in the great Bible, now at Althorp, in which the Duchess herself wrote the dates and times of her children's births. It had been expected in November. We may remember that in October the crossing from Holland had been so rough that the Duchess of York had been in actual danger from sea-sickness and that the yacht (with Sarah Churchill on board) lay tossing in the Downs for many hours waiting for permission to land. Whatever the reason—and in the seventeenth century an appallingly large number of children died within the first few months of birth—the baby with her mother's golden hair lived only a little while.

The separation was not this time to be for long, for on January 28th Charles asserted himself and took advantage of a momentary lull in the storm to recall his brother from Edinburgh, and on February 24th, 1679, the royal yachts anchored at Deptford and brought Colonel Churchill back to the wife he loved so much. Court life went on as usual, but the anti-Catholic feeling continued, though with perhaps a little less of its former hysterical violence. It was however,

strong enough in October, just before the narrow defeat of the Exclusion Bill¹ to induce Charles once more to remove his brother, whose presence in England seemed to stir up such devotion to the Protestant religion. So poor James and Mary Beatrice had to set out once more on their travels, and on October 20th, 1680, set sail for Scotland. This time Colonel Churchill was able to take his wife with him and introduce her to the tempered gaieties of the Scottish capital. Arrived at Kirkcaldy Roads, Sarah, in the train of the Duchess, was to take part in the public ceremonics and royal progresses that were afterwards to be so familiar to her. The royal party "went first to the Lord Chancellor's house at Lesley attended by a noble train of coaches; at Bruntisland they were received with shooting of great guns, ringing of bells and acclamations of the people and all the expression of joy imaginable. . . . Thence to Leith where the shoar was throng with persons of all ranks. . . . To the Water Gate of Holyrood House. . . . The bells of the city continued ringing most of the night and all the streets were piled with great bonfires, whither many of the citizens repaired to drink their Majesty's and Royal Highnesses' healths. Nor was anything to be seen but an universal joy in the countenances of all here."² Mary Beatrice made the best of things in Edinburgh and won the hearts of many by her beauty, grace and virtue. Poor Mary Beatrice—it was hard on her, shut up all that winter in grim tragic Holyrood away from little five-year-old Isabella. And in March, 1681, the little Princess died, far away in England, another of the many little royal lives that flickered a little while and then went out.

The exiled court indulged in such amusements as Edinburgh could provide, though many a stern head-shaking, dour look and scriptural objurgation greeted the unparalleled wickedness of ball and masquerade. Recreation, though these sober Scots, should not stray beyond the solemn rites of the golf links. But while James made himself popular at "goffe" his lady inflicted painful profanities on the virtuous capital in the form of concerts and even of stage-

¹ It passed the Commons and was thrown out in the Lords.

² Narrative of the Reception of their Royal Highnesses, 1680.

plays. Not that in these last she introduced her scandalised subjects to the witty indecorums of Wycherley and Dryden that were amusing Whitehall and of which she disapproved as much as anyone. But Dryden had done good service to her husband's cause in *Absalom and Achitophel* and had even penned a graceful and sympathetic reference to her own beauty and troubles. So they had acted his *Aureng-Zebe* at Holyrood on a previous visit. But even the high-flown heroics of Moghul emperors were too much for the susceptible virtue of the Scots, and the denunciations became more violent and even more scriptural. Sarah's first stay in Edinburgh did not last long, for being again with child, she journeyed south that winter and once more went to Jermyn Street with Lady Hamilton, to await the birth of the second baby. The correspondence with her husband went on as before—he ardent, adoring, she sometimes cold, sometimes responsive, but never, apparently, able to put all her love on paper and often prompted by some perverse and evil spirit to torment and pretend to doubt him. The breach with her mother had apparently been healed, though there are hints of disagreements with Lady Churchill. The Princess Anne was living at St. James' within a stone's throw of Jermyn Street, and the friends met once more. Sarah was twenty now and Anne sixteen, an age which, while admitting of more mental equality than can before have been possible, left Sarah, both from her four years' seniority and from the vantage-ground of marriage, perhaps even more able to influence the younger girl than she had been before. Anne was a woman now, and Sarah had known love and motherhood, and Anne wanted someone to discuss these things with, for there had already been talk of her betrothal. In January a young prince had arrived at court, from Hanover. He was a great-grandson of James I through his daughter Elizabeth who had married the Elector Palatine, and Anne herself was a great-granddaughter of James I. There was much talk about Prince George of Hanover, and what an excellent thing it would be if he, a Protestant and of Stuart blood, were to marry Princess Anne who, though it was not very likely, might succeed to the throne. He came, and saw, and made himself agreeable, and

(by permission) kissed Anne before the whole Court—and then went away. Some say that Dutch William made him go away by engineering at that moment the ill-starred match between him and his cousin Sophia Dorothea of Zell. But the possibility of Anne's succession was so remote that it is difficult to see why William should have troubled himself unless he was counting on the exclusion of James, and was unwilling to see Anne's husband nearer in blood to the English throne than himself. How poor Anne's feelings were involved it is hard to guess. Her vanity may have been hurt, and she would carry away from the episode no very friendly feelings to the house of Hanover, for at sixteen it is difficult to give due importance to political intrigues. Luckily however there was Sarah Churchill in Jermyn Street ready to sympathise, to share the suspicions against William, to criticise the Prince of Hanover and to speculate on Anne's matrimonial future. But in July James sent for his daughter, and she embarked in suitable pomp for Scotland on the 13th, six days before Sarah's baby was born. Mrs. Jennings was one godmother and Colonel Churchill's sister Arabella, late mistress to the Duke of York and now Mrs. Godfrey, the other. As soon as she was well enough Sarah set out to join her husband again in Edinburgh, the baby being left apparently with her mother at St. Albans. "Do not lose a minute," wrote Churchill, "in coming away to him that loves you above his own soul." He came as far as Berwick to meet her, and the next eight months were spent in Edinburgh in attendance as before on the Duchess of York and in daily intercourse and intimacy with the Princess Anne. Old memories of *Calisto* were revived when the court performed pastorals and masques. Royal birthdays were celebrated with "solemnities" and, daring once more to brave the wrath of the unco guid, the play of *Mithridates King of Pontus* was acted on November 15th, the Lady Anne and the ladies of honour being the only actors—greatly to the grief of Sir John Lauder.¹

More to the taste of the good townsmen of Edinburgh than these heathen representations were the "treits" or banquets which they sometimes gave his Royal Highness and

¹ Lord Fountainhall. *Historical Notices of Scottish Affairs*. Edinburgh, 1848.

the court. The menus make formidable reading if we may take one that has come down to us from 1679 as a specimen. The turkey pie all over gilded ruby must have been an impressive sight especially as George Porteous the herald had emblazoned it with the royal arms. Ham pies there were, salmoned pies, potailzie pie—whatever that was—handsomely decorated with gold fringe, lamb's pie, shrimp pies (these were vermillion), trotter pies and venison pasties, mince pies, tarts *a la mode*, plumb potag and, well in the Scottish tradition, "cockelike." And this was only a beginning! The hospitable Scots were evidently prepared to risk one at least of the seven deadly sins, even if it meant being extra careful about the other six.

The spring of 1682 once more saw negotiations on foot between James and Charles, who now wanted his brother to give up a Post Office Revenue of £5,000 a year to his mistress the Duchess of Portsmouth. James in return exacted permission to live in London and went south to arrange terms. He was attended by Colonel Churchill, who also accompanied him back to fetch the Duchess and her Court, and with him was wrecked in the *Gloucester* when she struck a sand-bank and foundered with the loss of two hundred lives, off Yarmouth roads. Only the few who could be taken into the little shallop with James were saved, and of these they said Churchill was the first to be called by his Royal Highness. Another yacht brought the survivors safely back to Scotland, and all was bustle and preparation for the return to England and the end of the long exile. The story of the wreck had to be told to Mary Beatrice, Anne, and Sarah Churchill, all of whom had so narrowly escaped bereavement, but with a courage that did credit to her and her ladies the Duchess elected to return by sea. They left Edinburgh on May 12th, and said good bye to Scotland at Leith where the good ship *Happy Return* waited for them, and fair winds blew them south till on the 26th she moored beside the King's barge at Erith and they went on board to the salute of guns and the cheering of crowds on shore. All the way up the Thames it was a triumphal progress, for James' recent danger and Mary Beatrice's courage—she was even then expecting a child—made them for the moment popular. They went back to St. James' Palace, and Mrs.

SARAH CHURCHILL AND THE PRINCESS ANNE

Churchill divided her time between Jermyn Street, the Palace and St. Albans where the baby girl was growing up. In 1679, her sister Barbara had died and Churchill had bought out Mr. Griffith, her husband, from his share in the Sandridge inheritance.

Young Mrs. Churchill had thus plenty to do, and in that summer of 1682 the Princess Anne had much to confide in her friend and more need than ever of her sympathy and guidance. This time it was no mere political alliance or even a formal affront. It was a full-length love affair. Anne was seventeen and she wanted romance as they once did, at seventeen. Let us be glad that, for a little while, she got it in full measure—summer, the park at Windsor and a poet in love with her. The Earl of Mulgrave, thirty years old, beautiful, reckless, sophisticated, accomplished, past master in the art of love-making, and a poet to boot—how could romantic, shy, unadventurous Anne, soft brown hair, soft sweet voice, resist him? It was, of course, hopeless from the start, and that alone must have lent it poignancy. Anne's father had married a commoner, it was true, but Charles was not likely to permit that kind of marriage a second time. Could not Anne remember Mary's days of weeping and why should she hope for a better fate? But for a few enchanted months the dull world of politics and religious faction was lit with radiance for her—until the rainbow bubble broke. Someone carried a love-letter to the king. "Lord Mulgrave, for writing to Lady Anne, is discharged the court." So ran the gossip in November¹, and spread like wildfire accompanied by the usual exaggerated and irresponsible rumours. It even reached stern old Sir John Lauder in Scotland.² Charles may have sympathised, but he acted promptly, and Mulgrave was sent away to fight the Moors at Tangier, that frequent destination of lovers whose ardour had outrun their discretion. Anne's midsummer night's dream was over. Poor Anne! Yet it is pleasant to remember, thinking of the dull sadness that was her life, that one summer when she was young she loved and was wooed by a poet. Perhaps Mulgrave was only flirting.

¹ Verney Papers. Nov. 9th 1682. H.M.C.

² Fountainhall. *op. cit.*

SARAH, DUCHESS OF MARLBOROUGH

He had no special gift for constancy, and Anne, though she may have sighed a little for his gay and audacious charm, must have read his later verses to other ladies with mixed feelings He wrote —

“ I must confess I am untrue
To Glorianna’s eyes
But he that’s smiled upon by you
Must all the world despise ”

Then blame me not for slighting now
What I did once adore
O do but this one change allow
And I can change no more ”

He would have taken her to Paradise and broken her heart
And for people of Anne’s temperament that is not worth while
As it was, he remained her very faithful friend

It is of course inevitable that Sarah should be accused by the most violent of her detractors of having been the betrayer The fact that there is no scrap of evidence for this does not in the least hinder them, neither are they deterred by its inherent improbability, its lack of motive and the significant detail that contemporary gossip, which spired no names, never once mentions her sin in this connection It is also conveniently overlooked that Anne’s friendship with and love for Sarah seems to have increased after this affair, for the time soon came when it was to be proved It was realised that, as Anne’s marriage was a matter that seemed likely to involve political or romantic complications, it had better be settled, and, after a series of intrigues by William of Orange and his life-long enemy Louis XIV, each trying to play his own game with Anne as a pawn, it was decided by Charles that the most suitable candidate was Prince George of Denmark He was accordingly invited to the English court in July 1683 that he might without loss of time fall in love at first sight, as instructed, with the Princess of York What Prince George thought nobody knew He didn’t think much about anything What Anne thought nobody cared, except perhaps her father and Sarah Churchill It wasn’t easy to fall in love with George of Denmark at first sight, but since his appearance was the



HER ROYAL HIGHNESS THE PRINCESS ANNE
From a mezzotint in the Sutherland Collection, Bodleian Library, Oxford
Painted by W. WISSING. Engraved by I. SMITH

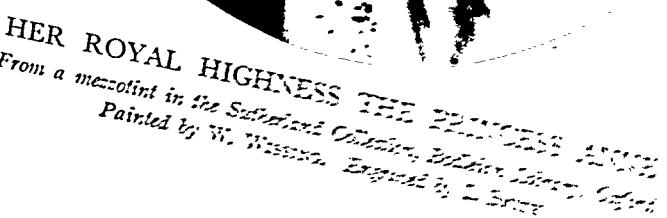
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HER ROYAL HIGHNESS THE PRINCESS ALEXANDRA
From a mezzotint in the *Satirical Cabinet* by H. S. T. S.
Painted by W. Winstanley, Engraved by J. S. Smith

only striking thing about him it had to be at once or not at all. He was very tall, very fair and very amiable. He liked his food and (especially) his drink and his comfort. He bored King Charles to death. "I've tried George drunk and I've tried him sober, and there's nothing in him," was Charles' verdict. But Anne married him, and he was good to her and never gave her a moment's pain and, though her passion and romance, cheated of Mulgrave and stifled by her husband, centred themselves more firmly on Sarah Churchill, she gave him for twenty-four years the affection of gratitude and disappointed maternity.

So on July 28th, 1683, the Princess of York became the Princess of Denmark, and the loyal citizens of London, willing to overlook George's Lutheran faith because it was not Catholic, rang their bells and lit their bonfires and began to think that, with Mary of Orange childless and Mary Beatrice's children dying as soon as born, this gentle princess who was so devoted to the Church might after all one day be their queen and save them from Popery. Anne was now promoted to the dignity of a house and establishment of her own. She was given £20,000 a year by Act of Parliament, and Charles gave her, as a wedding present, a residence at the Cockpit adjoining Whitehall. Old Whitehall palace was a beautiful Tudor building, and had been the home of Cardinal Wolsey. It occupied a space of about twenty-three acres along the northern bank of the river, a little below Westminster Bridge, and extended to St. James' Park and Spring Gardens. "The Cockpit" was the name given then to a suite of apartments adjoining the palace and built over a site indicated by its name. Cromwell had lived there and, by a suitable irony, General Monk as Duke of Albemarle. In Charles' time gay, insolent, profligate Buckingham held revel there, and great must have been the contrast when sober domesticated Anne moved in with her virtuous but regrettably uninspiring husband. Never again, however, was the place to ring with midnight shout and revelry, tipsy dance and jollity (though George was often, in due solemnity, tipsy enough), for after Anne left, it became the office of the Privy Council and now has achieved permanent respectability as Downing Street and the Treasury Buildings.

After the house and income, the suite Now at last Anne could do something for Mrs Churchill Sarah suggested that a post as lady of the bedchamber would be suitable Permission had to be asked of the Duke and Duchess, in whose service she then was, but James was always indulgent to Anne and consented at once Anne sent the news in a graceful little note —“The Duke has just come in as you were gone and made no difficulties, but has promised me that I shall have you, which I assure you is a great joy to me I should say a great deal for your kindness in offering it, but I am not good at compliments I will only say that I do take it *extreme* kindly and shall be ready at any time to do you all the service that is in my power”

The salary was £200 a year and was probably very welcome, for court life was expensive and the Churchills were very far from having even a comfortable income It was all settled then The strange friendship was as it were, signed, sealed and ratified in public by this appointment, and Sarah Churchill entered upon the second phase of her relationship with the girl who was, as yet, only the Princess Anne of Denmark

PART II

1684—1710

MRS. MORLEY AND MRS. FREEMAN



CHAPTER V

THE next few years, though politically of the highest moment, oddly enough affected Colonel and Mrs. Churchill rather in their results than directly by their events. In November 1683, James, probably from gratitude for various diplomatic missions successfully accomplished, had Colonel Churchill created Baron Churchill of Aymouth in Scotland, but beyond his ordinary military and court duties Lord Churchill took little or no part in the increasing complexities and violences of political and religious factions. While, in spite of differences of religion, he remained the favourite of the Duke, his wife's occupations and interests were now centred not at St. James' but at the Cockpit, where her duties, if not arduous, must sometimes have been a little exacting. Anne was not a person of any resources when it came to filling in her time, nor was her husband of the mental calibre to assist her. She was not capable of dealing with anything of depth or moment, so her mind, perforce, occupied itself with trifles. Gossip, etiquette, dress, domestic details—these were the subjects of her—one can scarcely dignify it by the name of conversation. A morning spent in the shops on 'Change Alley or with dressmakers, a little driving round the Ring in Hyde Park, tea and gossip and in the evening, cards; this was Anne's well-spent day. Or there would be a party of pleasure, at which Lady Churchill was always in attendance a masque at Gray's Inn, a day's hunting at Windsor, a river excursion to Richmond or Hampton Court, the usual round of court amusements which in the end must weary anyone of originality or vigour. An elaborate effort to kill time and avoid boredom—nothing individual, nothing creative, one day telling another and one night certifying another, this was the life of Sarah Churchill in the service of the Princess Anne.

There were of course variations on the theme. The scene would sometimes change to Tunbridge Wells, Bath or Newmarket. Newmarket was perhaps a more especially masculine haunt, although as Charles had built a house for himself there, the ladies of his court attended the races, less perhaps as sporting events than as fashionable gatherings. A man was never idle at Newmarket, said Tom Shadwell¹. He talked of nothing but dogs, cocks and horses, he sauntered on the heath, he played deep till midnight and the talk, wherever he was, was of dogs, cocks and horses. No he was never idle. Tunbridge Wells and Bath were less seriously occupied than with the points and chances of dogs, cocks and horses. They were the *Riviera* and *Lido* of the fashionable world, its *Aix*, Biarritz and Carlsbad, where the process of killing time could be pursued under the stimulus of a change of background and often dignified by the advice of an adroit and tactful physician, with the title of change of air and scene.

Tunbridge Wells was thus described by that observant, industrious and indefatigable tourist Mr John Macky²: 'We rise in the morning and go to the Wells where Gentlemen and Ladies meet together in dishabille to drink the waters at nine we go home to dress and at ten the company returns. Some go to Church and the others to the coffee houses where one is very well informed of what passes in the world. After prayers all the company appear in the walks in the greatest splendour, musick playing all the time, and the ladies and gentlemen divert themselves with raffling, hazzard, drinking of tea³ and walking till two when they go to dinner. In the afternoon there are bowling greens for those that love that diversion and in those greens are balls four times a week for the young people. At night the company generally return to the shops on the walks where is all manner of play till midnight.'

The diversions of Bath would answer to the same description. It is all very modern, a little more drinking perhaps, a little more churchgoing (if only from political motives), a little more gambling, a little less violent exercise, but in essentials

¹ *The True Vidou* 1679

² *A Journey through England* 1714

³ A recent (1680) innovation of Catharine of Braganza

a mode of life which has remained unaltered. It imposes no kind of strain upon the mind and will keep going by its own momentum and reward its devotees by that narrowness of outlook which spells tranquillity. At the end of the seventeenth century, its main diversion was cards. Anne's repertoire of distractions was soon exhausted, but basset or ombre could fill any gap. The part that cards played in the life of almost every fashionable woman of this time can only be paralleled to-day by that small section of society which dedicates its life to bridge. But to Anne, with no intellectual life of any description, disliking any conversation that was not gossip or trivialities, cards were the natural and almost the only resource. Card-playing was one of the accomplishments of every young woman. Richard Seymour in 1674 published *The Complete Gamester: or Full and Easy Instructions for playing the Games now in Vogue*. This was written for "young princesses" and dedicated to them as a suitable tribute. "Gaming," says Seymour in the preface, "is become so much the fashion among the *beau monde* that he who in company should appear ignorant of the games in vogue would be reckoned low-bred and hardly fit for conversation." Even courtiers and beaux, sometimes found themselves neglected for the basset-table, and we find Sir George Etherege, who was both, and a dramatist into the bargain, complaining

"The time which should be kindly lent
 To plays and witty men
 In waiting for a Knave is spent
 Or wishing for a Ten."

Sarah Churchill in later years was to call Anne "a little card-playing automaton," but she seems at this time at any rate to have shared this taste with her mistress, for, writing of these years she says that she never read or employed her time in anything but playing at cards; and we may remember her other remark that she knew only men and cards. It is possible of course that it was less wearisome to play cards with Anne for hours and hours than to talk to her for hours and hours. But the Duchess' love of cards can be noted no less in her old age than now at the Cockpit.

This intimate daily life together for long periods at a stretch and Lady Churchill's "unwearied application to serve and amuse" the princess, cemented the friendship, and Anne, who coveted a friend, grew desirous of an even closer intercourse. She who was noted for her punctiliousness in matters of etiquette, grew impatient of the barriers of rank and royalty. Writing from Winchester, September 20, 1684, she says to Sarah: ". . . let me beg of you not to call me highness at every word, but be as free with me as one friend ought to be with another. And you can never give me any greater proof of your friendship than in telling me your mind freely in all things, which I do beg of you to do."

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In the February of 1685 the curtain suddenly fell on the first act of that strange eventful history which finally seated the Princess of Denmark on the throne itself. There was little warning. Mr. John Evelyn paid a visit to the court at Whitehall on Sunday evening, February 1st, and noted with grave sadness its worldliness and levity—the king playing with three of his lovely mistresses, the courtiers gambling at the basset-table with a pool of £2,000, a French boy singing love songs in "that glorious gallery". But the next day there came news that the king was ill. For a few days the nation who loved him and feared James hoped against hope. Within Whitehall Charles bore his pain and faced his death with courage and courtesy. But on the sixth he who had loved life

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James had had the sympathies of the country with him thus far, but he now took the first steps in their alienation by the ferocity of his vengeance not only on the rebel leaders, but on the ignorant rustics who had formed the bulk of the insurgent army. The Bloody Assize of Judge Jeffreys, with its record of three hundred and fifty hanged, eight hundred sold into slavery and hundreds more flogged and imprisoned, is still a terrible memory. When the dreadful tales were told, there were many whose eyes were opened to the strain of cruelty and obstinacy in James, and one of them was Churchill.

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"This marble," he said, laying his hand upon the chimney-piece, "is not harder than the King's heart"

The blind fanaticism and, to put it at no higher level, the stupid injudiciousness then displayed by the King were soon directed into other and even more dangerous channels. They say that whom the gods wish to destroy they first make mad. They must have wished to destroy James, for no one but a madman would have attempted, as he did now, with all the violence of a convert, to impose the Roman Catholic religion on a nation which hated it, and by means which outraged both the liberties and the constitutional rights he had solemnly sworn to preserve. He could scarcely have chosen a more unpropitious moment. By the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes in 1685, the persecution of the Protestants which had been spasmodic in France was organised and legalised, and as large numbers of French refugees then found sanctuary in England, Englishmen had many opportunities of hearing how a Popish King broke his word, and the cruelties and injustices that followed.

Yet James, doubtless believing his mission to be a divine one and directed to the "honour" of his Church, went blindly on from outrage to outrage. He attended Mass in state, he officiated the army with Catholics, he put the government of Scotland and Ireland into their hands (the viceroy of Ireland was Frances Jennings' second husband, the Duke of Tyrconnel), Catholic priests flaunted their habits in the streets of London and Jesuits boasted of their influence at court. In 1686 Henry Compton, Bishop of London and Princess Anne's old tutor, was suspended for permitting sermons against Catholics. Neither of the Universities escaped. At Cambridge, the Vice-Chancellor was dismissed for refusing to violate his own statutes by admitting a monk to a degree. At Oxford worse was to happen. A Catholic was appointed to the Deanery of Christ Church, and when the Fellows of Magdalen College refused to obey the command to elect a Catholic as their President they were ejected by force and twelve Catholics admitted as Fellows in a single day. Neither check nor warning had any effect on James. He acted like a man possessed, careless what laws he violated, whom he

outraged, or what forces he stirred up. The Pope's legate was received in state at Windsor, high offices in the State were one by one transferred to Catholics, James' own brothers-in-law, Rochester and Clarendon, being dismissed to make way for them. In fact, to quote a later phrase of the Duchess he "had a mind that everybody should attend him in heaven by establishing popery here."

In 1687, hoping to pave the way for an even more general toleration of Catholics, he issued a Declaration of Indulgence to Nonconformists and Catholics alike, a step he had no shadow of legal right to take. It was refused by the Dissenters. He packed the House of Lords by the creation of new peers in the hope of repealing the Test Act, but the Commons in spite of intimidation stood firm. Finally, in April 1688, as if determined to bring matters to a head, he issued a second Declaration and ordered the clergy to read it for two successive Sundays from their pulpits. Practically the whole Church refused. Archbishop Sancroft and six of his bishops (amongst them Compton of London) presented a protest to the King against this illegal¹ Declaration. The King's reply was to commit them to the Tower whither they journeyed as for a triumphal progress, the very sentinels kneeling to receive their blessing at the gates. In June they were tried by a criminal court for seditious libel. James had packed the jury and selected the judge, but even his tools were frightened by the popular clamour. He went to Hounslow to review the troops, and there a courier met him with news of the acquittal. As he left the camp a great shout arose from the soldiers. He was told that it was "nothing, only that the troops are glad of the acquittal".

"Do you call that nothing?" said James; and he was right. It was only nothing in the sense that the last straw is nothing. Even the army with its Catholic officers was disaffected, and James was indeed playing a lone hand.

At the Hague, distrust had deepened to suspicion and suspicion to active opposition. Angry correspondence had passed between William and James, and between James and

¹ The alteration of laws affecting religion would have to be a matter for Parliament and could not lie within the personal prerogative of the Sovereign.

Mary letters of remonstrance on his side and prevarication on hers

And Anne? What of Anne at the Cockpit, pouring her troubles into the passively sympathetic ears of George and the actively sympathetic ones of Sarah Churchill? Her father's proceedings troubled and frightened her, and in whom should she confide but the friend who had shared with her the early teachings of Compton and with her had listened to his vigorous denunciations of Popery? George was, after all, a Lutheran, and could not be expected to share Anne's devotion to the Church of England. As early as 1686 she is unburdening herself to Sarah on this subject. "I was very much surprised," she writes, "when I heard of the four new privy councillors¹ and am very sorry for it, for it will give great countenance to those sort of people, and methinks it has a very dismal prospect. Whatever changes there are in the world I hope you will never forsake me, and I shall be happy."

It is fairly clear to which side Anne's sympathies were tending. She was thoroughly frightened, and felt that her own private life might not be immune from invasion. We are told that the day her first child was to be christened the King came to visit her and a priest with him, "who no sooner the Princess saw than she fell a crying."² Her chapel at Whitehall had been taken away to have Mass said in it, and the clergy dismissed. The events of the two following years can have done nothing but strengthen her sympathies and her fears and alienate her still further from her father whom she saw attacking, in a way that even she could perceive to be illegal, all that she held most dear. Her own household was involved in 1687, when the Earl of Scarsdale was dismissed from his Lord Lieutenantcy of Derbyshire and his regiment of cavalry for refusing to further the King's designs.

Then came the events of 1688, and Anne's fears grew with the rising storm. At the beginning of the year the one contingency most feared by the Protestants was declared to be a fact. The Queen was said to be with child. Those who had consoled themselves for the present tyranny by reflecting that

¹ Lords Powis Bellasis Dover and Arundel all Catholics
² Letters of Lady Chaworth to Lord Rous June 2nd, 1686 Rutland MSS

both the heiresses to the Crown were Protestant and that Anne at least seemed to bear children regularly were aghast. Here was the danger, if the child should prove a son, of a long line of Catholic sovereigns, for it was not to be supposed that James, who had so signally ignored the constitution of his kingdom, would suffer his son to be bred in the Church of England. Superstition, ignorance and fear soon began to produce fantastic rumours, and it was whispered first secretly, then freely and openly, that the pregnancy was false and that a plot was afoot to impose a supposititious Prince of Wales upon the nation, for James had acted with his usual injudiciousness in making a parade of the various intercessions, invocations, relics, masses, pilgrimages, etc., which had been employed on behalf of his wife and himself.

Anne wrote all this to Mary at the Hague. She was living now in an almost pleasurable state of excitement and apprehension, and romantically awaiting the moment when she should be called on to be a martyr to her faith—though until now her father had obstinately refused to make any attempt to martyrisce her. But Mary knew more than Anne. She knew that there had been letters to William from great lords in England, letters asking him to come over and restore liberty and justice to the kingdom that was his wife's inheritance. Lady Churchill might have told Anne that, for her husband's name came early in the list of those who declared themselves ready to support William. "Now or never," said William,¹ vigorous and laconic as usual. So the letters went on, and the plans were made, and James made it plainer every day that there was nothing to hope from him but tyranny, and that, compared with his Church, the constitution of England and his own coronation oaths were mere scraps of paper.

The Queen's son was born on June 10th—three weeks before the trial of the seven bishops. The birth had been expected in July, and Anne had gone to Bath for some ailment real or imaginary, and consequently was not present. With amazing stupidity—for the rumours of an imposition had been rife for some months—no formal representative of the interest of

¹ They say now that William never said it. But its truth, if not historical, is philosophical.

the Protestant heiresses was summoned to the accouchement, though many Catholics were present, amongst them Lady Tyrconnel. The wildest stories were current. A child had been brought in a warming pan. The Queen's child had died and another had been substituted. Nothing was too fantastic.

Anne hurried home from Bath, heard all the gossip, and went on with her letters to Mary. "I shall never now be satisfied," she wrote, "whether the child be true or false; maybe 'tis our brother . . . where one believes it a thousand do not. For my part, unless they do give a very plain demonstration . . . I shall ever be of the number of the unbelievers."

The correspondence¹ between the sisters, amazingly indecent in its frank obstetrics, shows very clearly that both affected to persuade themselves that the allegations of fraud were well founded. It is perhaps significant that Anne never once mentions the name of Lady Churchill in this connection, though in a letter written before the birth she had assured Mary that Lady Churchill would supply her with news in her absence at Tunbridge Wells. It would seem that her doubts, real or pretended, were not shared by her friend, whose sister had indeed been present at the birth. Anne did not of course dare to make her feelings public. In a confidential interview with her uncle, Lord Clarendon,² she only remarked of the rumours, "I would not say I believe them, but I must say the Queen's behaviour . . . was very odd." "Why then," said Clarendon, "did you not speak to the King?" "If I had said anything to the King," replied Anne, "he would have been angry and then God knows what might have happened." The next day, the whole Privy Council waited on Anne and laid before her copies of the depositions concerning the birth of the Prince of Wales. "My lords," said Anne, "this was not necessary; for I have so much duty to the King that his word must be more to me than these depositions." These details apparently concern Lady Churchill but little, except in so far as they seem to point to her acceptance of the disputed birth. But they show two things clearly—Anne's

¹ Sir John Dalrymple, *Memoirs of Great Britain and Ireland*. 1771. Appendix.

² Clarendon's Diary.

fear of her father and her powers of duplicity, qualities both of which were to influence her relations, present and future, with Sarah Churchill.

Lord Clarendon, blunt, honest, tactless, was no match for the evasive, non-committal, impenetrably obstinate Anne. She innocently tells him on September 23rd that "she found the King much disordered about the preparations which were making in Holland", and asks him what he has heard. Already determined to throw in her lot with William and Mary, trusting implicitly to the protection and guidance of the Churchills, she probably knew a great deal more than he did. It was then more than a year since Lord Churchill had assured William that "the Princess of Denmark is safe in trusting of me." So she was for that matter, but in the anxious weeks that followed these interviews with Clarendon, Anne had finally to make her choice. She had to decide between her affection for her father—an affection never very deep and now weakened, alienated, and changed to fear however ill-founded—and all the ties of childhood and temperament and training which united her to her sister and to Sarah Churchill. These ties were reinforced and immeasurably strengthened by the emotional quality of the religious issue which, to do her justice, counted very deeply with her. How should Anne turn her back on those she loved most, on the Church she venerated, to throw in her lot with a father who at this very moment was trusting for protection, not only in the loyalty he had outraged and which in some had miraculously stood firm, not in belated promises of redress, but in the rites of a Church which both Anne and the nation hated and feared? ¹

Sullen and hostile, the Londoners waited. Would the Prince of Orange never come? It almost seemed as if these Popish superstitions had in them something of black magic, for the wind blew ever from the west and day after day the steeples were scanned in vain for a "Protestant", an east wind. The King was at Salisbury with those of the troops who even now were apparently loyal and, that no further act of folly should be wanting to strain their loyalty to its breaking-point, he now began to enlist the hated Irish in

¹James ordered the Host to be elevated for his protection.

their ranks. The people of England countered with a song—an absurd but bitter and vigorous doggerel ballad against the Irish viceroy, with a lilting refrain that caught the ear and haunted the memory. And Thomas, Lord Wharton, who had written this *Lillibulero*, as it was called, afterwards boasted that he had sung a king out of three kingdoms. That was not quite true, but those of us for whom *Tipperary* is a requiem do not need to be reminded of the power of a street ballad.

October wore to its close and the nation, with the amazing patience and instinct for order of its race, waited for William. November came, and with it the anniversary of the Gunpowder Plot, and at last the wind changed, and the news came that William's fleet was sailing down the Channel. On the very day on which Englishmen were then accustomed to celebrate the failure of Guy Fawkes and burn the Pope in effigy, the Prince of Orange landed at Torbay.

The Princess of Denmark and her first Lady of the Bed-chamber were alone at the Cockpit. George who had been "reported to be valiant"¹ had gone, to save appearances, to join his father-in-law. Churchill was also at Salisbury in command of a brigade and still, in spite of warnings, trusted by the King. But as William's troops marched inland and it became clear that the country was with him, it seemed at last possible to Churchill's prudence to throw off the mask of loyalty and declare himself openly for William. So he deserted James by night and went to Axminster to William, taking his brigade with him. A few days later, he was followed by Prince George, of whom James remarked that were it not that he was connected to him by his dearest child, the loss of a stout trooper would have grieved him more.

We are not concerned here to discuss the ethics of Lord Churchill's desertion, for the question affects his wife but little. Although we may feel that to keep up the pretence as long as he did was scarcely necessary, and was marked more by caution than by honour or delicacy, yet of the actual event we may say as Johnson said of Dryden at the Restoration—that if he changed, he changed with the nation, and that his

¹ Evelyn.

motives were no lower than those of anyone else who preferred a Dutch deliverer to an English tyrant. That both Princess Anne and Lady Churchill were aware of the plans of their husbands cannot be doubted, for Anne had, on November 18th, written to William that she would be guided entirely by her friends (by which she meant the Churchills) and that Prince George would join him as "soon as his friends thought proper."

Sarah Churchill left nothing to chance. A wooden staircase had been constructed some weeks previously leading from Anne's apartments to her own (from whence the palace could be left) under pretext of convenient communication between the friends. They were soon put to another use—the one for which they had originally been designed. On November 24th news came of the desertion of Churchill and Prince George, and with it orders to arrest Lady Churchill and Lady Fitzharding—a friend both of Sarah and Anne. Love and fear both now spurred Anne to action. She obtained from the Queen a delay in the execution of the arrests. She would do anything to protect Mrs. Freeman, and anything to avoid seeing her father—by now he probably knew of her letters to William and Mary. She said she would jump out of the window rather than face him.

For Sarah's part in what followed we have, to adapt a phrase of Falstaff's, partly the lady's own word and partly our own opinion. Her description of herself as having had "no further share than obeying her mistress' orders" can only be believed by those who know nothing of either mistress or servant. The sight of Anne issuing daring and spectacular orders which Sarah meekly obeyed was one which no one, either then or at any other time, was privileged to witness.

They decided on flight. The sentries had been doubled round Anne's apartments and departure by daylight was out of the question. Also, they needed help from outside—a coach and an escort. In the crisis they turned to the man who, while a bitter enemy of James, had since childhood influenced and supported them—Henry Compton, Bishop of London. His lordship was ready and willing. Here was a gallant adventure and a blow at Popery much to his taste.

SARAH, DUCHESS OF MARLBOROUGH

He and Lady Churchill arranged a rendezvous outside the Palace at midnight. Anne went to her room at the usual time and was soon after joined by Sarah and Lady Fitzharding. The time dragged on till the appointed hour when they stole down the new wooden stairway and crept out of the palace. It was November at its worst—pitch black and torrents of rain. Nothing but love, fear and the wills of her companions could surely have driven Anne to go on with it. In the darkness they were joined by one, no, two martial figures, for the Bishop, feeling no doubt as if his military youth had been renewed, had donned cloak, tunic and sword, and carried a brace of pistols—it was a night for footpads. The other figure was Charles Sackville, Earl of Dorset, Nell Gwynne's "Charles the first", now grown elderly and perhaps even respectable, but still ready to succour beauty in distress, for he had been a poet and a soldier in his youth, and he lives even now in our memories by his delicious "To all you ladies now at land".

They had to walk through wind and rain to Charing Cross, where a coach waited for them. The road, if such it could be called, was like a quagmire. Anne was ill-equipped for such a venture, and her shoe, flimsy and high-heeled, was left prisoned in the sticky mud. But the Earl had not forgotten all his old accomplishments and amidst much smothered laughter he fitted his long leathern gauntlet on to Anne's foot. Stumbling and hurrying lest the alarm should be given, the three ladies and their maid reached the coach and were driven to the Bishop's house in Aldersgate. From there they set out for Copt Hall in Essex, where it was Dorset's turn to play host. Their destination was Nottingham, where the Bishop's brother, the Earl of Northampton, and other noblemen received them. Anne, finding herself the centre of their Protestant loyalty, entered into the situation with zest, and almost succeeded in persuading herself that her life really was in danger from her father's troopers—not one of whom would have hurt a hair of her head.

She was acclaimed and feted, and the story of the escape must have been told and retold many times with much loving insistence on the courage and forethought of Lady Churchill

who had arranged it all. For Sarah must have been a welcome change from the dull routine of the Cockpit. She was taking a hand for the first time in the game of politics and the destinies of the State, and her beauty, wit and charm, all flushed with excitement and success, now came for a short time upon the stage. A little picture of her at Nottingham has come down to us in the oddest way. The Earl of Devonshire entertained the Princess at a banquet. But Nottingham was a camp and not a palace, and it was troopers and not footmen who filled its courtyards. Nothing daunted, Devonshire turned the most presentable of his young dragoons into footmen for the occasion. Amongst them was a young man who in after life was to win fame in other scenes than battle or servants' hall. He it was whose allotted place was behind the chair of Lady Churchill, and little did she dream that the footman handing her the wine and water she asked for had laid his heart, then and for ever at her feet. Colley Cibber, playwright, adventurer, incurable romanticist, was, to please his father, trying to forget the lure of the footlights in an army career. His youthful eyes were dazzled and his inflammable heart was kindled by Sarah's loveliness, and long years afterwards when he and she were old, he lived again those hours of his youth and, the memory of them undimmed, chronicled them in his autobiography.¹ This is what he says: "All my senses were collected into my eyes which during the whole entertainment wanted no better amusement than stealing now and then the delight of gazing on the fair object so near to me. If so clear an emanation of beauty, such a commanding grace of aspect struck me into a regard that had something softer than the most profound respect in it, I cannot see why I may not without offence remember it. Since Beauty, like the Sun, must sometimes lose its power to chuse, and shine into equal warmth the Peasant and the Courtier."

We can divine the emotion through the stilted language, And now the bust of Colley Cibber stands just opposite the picture of Sarah of Marlborough in a silent room in the National Portrait Gallery.

Anne held her miniature court at Nottingham and then,

¹ *Apology for the Life of Colley Cibber, Comedian, 1740.*

SARAH, DUCHESS OF MARLBOROUGH

escorted by her hosts and the martial Bishop who rode in full panoply before her carrying a purple flag, she journeyed to Leicester and thence to Warwick. There is an ugly story of a proposal to form a league for the extermination of all Papists. It came to nothing through the opposition of those gentlemen (chief amongst them Lord Chesterfield) who declared that they had gathered for purposes of protection, not of massacre; but Anne must have lost her head badly for such a proposal ever to have been made in her presence. The warlike retinue marched finally to Oxford, meeting with never an enemy, and there the Princess was safely handed over to her valiant husband.

Great had been the consternation at the Cockpit when Anne's room was found empty. Lady Clarendon and Anne's nurse rushed screaming about the palace and even forced their way into the Queen's apartments crying that their mistress had been murdered by her Majesty's priests. The tumult, however, dwindled to a calm when it became known that a letter from the Princess to the Queen had been found. Anne did not boggle at a lie or two in this letter, saying that she was "deeply affected with the surprising news of the Prince's¹ being gone" . . . and more to the same effect. Lady Churchill may have had a hand in its composition. The political comment reads more like her than like Anne, though the duplicity is more characteristic of Anne's timidity than of Sarah's recklessness.

The uproar was soon followed by the arrival of James himself at the palace. When he learnt of Anne's flight to his enemies he exclaimed in grief, "God help me! My own children have forsaken me in my distress!" The situation was desperate indeed, but James' temperament was not of the kind that would allow him to make concessions, however desirable. Obstinacy and bigotry still had their way with him. He betrayed even his own supporters, and while pretending to negotiate with William, who had advanced as far as Hungerford, was secretly making plans for the escape of his wife and baby son to France. As soon as this was safely accomplished the palace of Whitehall saw yet another of its

¹ George.

royal occupants creep stealthily from its doors and James, his protestations of reform scarcely cold upon his lips, fled by night to Sheerness, leaving his capital to riot and plunder. It would have been simpler for everybody if he had succeeded in getting away, but some over-zealous sailors, recking little of situations of political delicacy, recognised and intercepted him, and after some rough usage, he was brought back and finally lodged at Rochester—much, one imagines, to William's embarrassment and annoyance. From there he returned to Whitehall, while William had got as far as Windsor. But even James now perceived that he had gone too far ever to hope for faith and loyalty again. He was virtually a prisoner in Whitehall, with Dutch guards round him. He accepted William's offer of a residence at Rochester—a town convenient to the Medway and the Thames estuary. It was judiciously hinted that tactfulness rather than vigilance was expected from his Majesty's guards. There was only one way out and James took it. On December 22nd, attended by the Duke of Berwick his son by John Churchill's sister, he once more stole away by night leaving his kingdom, this time for ever. Charles II's prophecy had come true. James had set out on his travels. The Revolution was over, and Dutch William slept at St. James'.

CHAPTER VI

WHILE James and Mary were being received at Versailles with all the politeness and pomp that could be devised by that incomparable master of ceremonies, Louis XIV, William in London was holding his hand. The situation was indeed delicate. The legal king had, to put it bluntly, run away. Was the throne therefore vacant? What then became of the cry "The King is dead. Long live the King!" for thus were Englishmen wont to affirm that though the king may die, his office lives on in his successor. They wanted no innovations, no clean cut with the past. They had been fighting for their ancient liberties, let the debaters in Parliament take counsel from the old time before them. The throne of England was not of yesterday. In William the Conqueror's Tower they had the record of past kings, and Richard II, Edward IV and Henry VII were summoned to the bar of the House. It was finally decided that James had by his flight in effect abdicated, and that the throne was vacant. Thus was the Revolution concluded with grave legal arguments and solemn appeal to tradition, and the memory of 1399 was invoked to countenance the judgment of 1688.

But what to do now? The disputes ran high. Many and weighty were the speeches, and notable amongst them that of a young barrister named John Somers which displayed a wisdom and learning beyond his years. Some would have a Regency. Some would even recall James—though these were few. To others it was manifest that James' Protestant heiress had succeeded, and that the Princess Mary of Orange was already Queen of England. That might have solved all difficulties, but the Lords and Commons found they were dealing with a determined man and with a woman in love with her husband—for Mary was that by now. She refused

to listen to any suggestion that she alone should be Queen, saying that she was William's wife and counted that above any other title. William's response had neither the grace nor the affection of his wife's. He intimated that, while the Houses were at liberty to decide on a Regency, he would not be Regent, and as for being Prince Consort, he was not made so that he could hold anything by apron strings. One of his Dutch friends put it, if possible, even less graciously. William, he said, was not willing to be his wife's gentleman-usher. The matter was solved, after the English fashion, by compromise. William and Mary were to be King and Queen regnant. By these means, the traditional and hereditary principle was recognised and the practical, if not the legal difficulties disposed of.

But Mary was not the only daughter of James, and though she might, if she chose, renounce all her rights in favour of her husband, when it came to the succession there was Anne to be reckoned with. It had been proposed that the crown should devolve upon Mary and William for their joint and separate life-times; but for this to become law, the Princess of Denmark would be required to renounce her right to succeed directly after her sister Mary. William was older than his wife and his health was deplorable. It did not seem very likely that he would survive her, but then, neither had it at one time seemed likely that Mary would be Queen.

Anne was beginning to count, it appeared, and Lord Churchill's wife, who had always been such a great friend, and who they said had actually carried her off by night to Nottingham, was evidently now a person to be reckoned with too. The Princess and Lady Churchill had returned to London from Oxford on December 19th. It was safe enough then even for Anne's fears, for her father had left Whitehall for Rochester the previous day. Both Anne and Sarah were in high spirits. It had all gone off splendidly. Anne need no longer be afraid of her father and the Catholics, and Sarah had seen her husband's plans come to a triumphant conclusion and had every reason to suppose that the House of Orange would prove itself grateful. They went to the play that night, and the curious audience could note with its own eyes that the

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Then came all the negotiations about the settlement of the throne, and for a time nobody knew what Anne was going to do. She didn't know herself, and at first she flatly refused to postpone any right in favour of William. Clarendon¹ tried to get her to make a definite statement and to obstruct the accession of William, but as in the past, Anne evaded him with contradictions and prevarications and impenetrable silences. As usual, she was concealing something, for in this, as in other recent momentous happenings, she was being guided by the Churchills, and Clarendon, exasperated, told his niece that it was being said that Lord Churchill had guaranteed her concurrence. Finally, after the tortuous delays and duplicity which were becoming her usual method of dealing with any difficulty, Anne definitely consented to postpone her right, and the path lay clear for her sister and brother-in-law. The Duchess afterwards wrote an account of the various steps by which she finally led Anne to acquiesce in the proposed settlement. It is best given in her own words:

"It was insinuated that to make my court to the King and Queen, I had influenced the Princess to forego her undoubted rights. The truth is I did persuade her to consent to the project of that settlement and to be easy under it after it was made. But no regard for the King and Queen nor any view of ambition had the least share in moving me to this conduct. . . . And as to giving King William the crown for life, it was the same principle of regard for the public welfare that carried me to advise the Princess to acquiesce in it. It is true that when the

¹ Diary.

thing was first started I did not see any necessity for such a measure, and I thought it so unreasonable that I took a great deal of pains to promote my mistress's pretensions. But I quickly found that all endeavours of that kind would be ineffectual, that all the principal men were for the King, and that the settlement would be carried in Parliament, whether the Princess consented or not. So that in reality there was nothing advisable but to yield with a good grace. . . . However as I was fearful about everything the Princess did while she was thought to be advised by me, I could not satisfy my own mind till I had consulted with several persons of undisputed wisdom and integrity, and particularly with the Lady Russell of Southampton House and Dr. Tillotson, afterwards Archbishop of Canterbury. I found them all unanimous in the opinion of the expediency of the settlement proposed, as things were then situated. In conclusion therefore I carried Dr. Tillotson to the Princess, and upon what he said to her, she took care that no disturbances should be made by her pretended friends the Jacobites, who had pressed her earnestly to form an opposition.¹"

There is no reason for believing this account to be anything but true. The chief Jacobite in question was Lord Clarendon who was working against Lady Churchill in trying to get Anne to press her claims in Parliament, a proceeding which Lady Churchill rightly considers would have been both useless and indecorous. For she observes that the sisters having been forced for the security of liberty and justice, to depose their father, "she who discovered the less ambition would have the most amiable character". As for William, she does not seem to have had at this time either affection or distaste for him. She says that it never occurred to her that he would become King and this may be true also, for who could know which way things would go, and William did not actually become King without argument and opposition. The Duchess was often attacked for her share in influencing Anne at this crisis, and her motives usually ascribed to

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ambition Apart from the fact that, her husband having espoused the cause of the Prince of Orange, it was scarcely to be expected that she should follow King James, it is difficult to see how ambition could have been anyone's motive in taking sides in the miserable business of the Revolution It was not a question of the setting or the rising sun It was civil war, or its prospect, and what had to be considered was whether England was to be governed despotically or constitutionally How should Sarah Churchill be on the side of Catholicism and the despots? As for ambition, her advice to Anne to postpone her claims gives the lie at once to this charge, for Lord Churchill's position with William could not be compared with her own with the Princess, and by postponing the prospect of Anne's succession she was, if she thought about it at all, postponing her own access to power

When it was all finally settled, Mary, who had been diplomatically waiting at the Hague, sailed for England and arrived at Greenwich with great pomp, being met there with every mark of sisterly love by Anne But Mary had changed The years of repression and unhappiness in Holland had hardened her The day, when weeping she had left Gravesend and they dared not tell Anne she had gone, was long past She had been away from her own people for eleven long years, and in that time William by some strange alchemy had hardened her heart to all but himself Cold he was, silent and often harsh, and it was Elizabeth Villiers who had his love, if love it could be called For William with his invalid's body, his strong statesman's mind and his indomitable and inscrutable spirit, had no time for women, with their empty prettiness and their trivial minds He could not easily tolerate intelligences feebler than his own Yet there was that in him, some quality of wise steadfastness, some pathos in his lonely self command, some passion even, that could wake and keep the enduring love of a few men and two women And Mary, his wife, had come to love him, and for his sake, though with misery and bitterness, suffered Elizabeth Villiers in her train For by now she had no will but William's and affection for her own kith and kin had been swallowed up in the tide of her passion for her husband In return he

gave her gratitude and respect, and an affection deeper than at the time he realised.

She came to Whitehall on February 12th. The cordiality towards Lady Churchill which had been expressed previously by letters was now marked by the latter's attendance on her to Whitehall palace. "I was," says the Duchess, "extremely caressed by her." It was unfortunate for Mary that on this occasion she was watched by such a keen eye since, by all accounts, her conduct left much to be desired in the way of delicacy and natural feeling, for having come to apartments in Whitehall which were those previously occupied by her father and step-mother, she showed herself in the highest spirits and ran about appraising the furniture and contents and turning up the quilts on the beds, as, to quote the Duchess, "people do when they come into an inn". As this account is borne out by Evelyn, Burnet and Oldmixon, its truth is beyond question.

But though Mary appeared to behave thus strangely, for a time all went well, and life seemed to be about to sink back to its old routine of killing time at the Cockpit, though as William had retired to Hampton Court, it was much duller than it used to be. Lady Churchill, however, had many other calls upon her time beside those made by attendance upon the Princess. There was now Holywell House, a beautiful home at St. Albans, built for her under the shadow of the cathedral near her old home by the husband who loved her as much as ever, and the nursery, by 1688, had four children in it. Henrietta had been followed in 1685 by a sister to whom Anne had stood godmother and who was named after her. 1686 brought the longed-for son, another John Churchill, and 1687 another daughter whom they called Elizabeth. And now, in the spring of 1689 both Anne and Sarah were awaiting the birth of children in July, for Anne, like Sarah, had been of late years much occupied with maternity, though her children, diseased and sickly, did little more than flicker, on the threshold of life. The birth of children to the two women and interest in their care would have drawn even closer the bonds between them, and Sarah had in her turn stood godmother to one of Anne's children. She was at this

time happy in both children and husband. John Churchill's relations with his children were as beautiful and gentle as they were with his wife, though not even little daughters could rob their mother of her supremacy in his heart. We have a letter¹ written to his wife while she was away at Tunbridge Wells, probably in attendance on Anne.

"You cannot imagine," he writes, "how I am pleased with the children; for they, having nobody but their maid, are so fond of me, that when I am at home they will be always with me, kissing and hugging me. Their heats are quite gone, so that against you come home they will be in beauty. . . . Miss is pulling me by the arm that she may write to her dear mamma; so I shall say no more, only beg that you will love me always as well as I love you, and then we cannot but be happy." To this there is appended in childish handwriting:

I kiss your hands my dear mamma,—HARRIET.

Now all was bustle in preparation for the coronation on April 11th, though Anne, being near her time, was not able to take part and neither presumably was Sarah for the same reason, though the princess and her ladies watched it from a special private box in the Abbey. The day was not without its evil omens, for as Anne was dressing, news came that James had landed at Kinsale, and a letter from him was handed to Mary as she was setting out for the Abbey, calling upon her head a father's curse, should she be crowned. But it was too late now, and Compton, Bishop of London, saw his labours come to fruition when, with his own hands, he placed crowns upon the heads of William and of Mary.

The House of Orange did at first seem grateful. Lord Churchill became a member of the Privy Council and a Lord of the bedchamber, and his services and those of his wife were further recognised in the coronation honours by an earldom. Now it was that Lord Churchill's choice fell upon the name which he was to endow with immortality and now, for the

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first time, we meet him as Earl of Marlborough, the name which, as one historian has wittily remarked, was to be misspelt through all the capitals of Europe. Relations with the King and Queen continued to be friendly for, when the Countess of Marlborough's child was born in July, the Queen herself was godmother and called the baby Mary.

Marlborough, who, even to consolidate his fortunes, could not bring himself to take the field against his old master in Ireland, now went over to Flanders and, by the genius he displayed in a few minor engagements, showed William that for his campaigns against France he had, if he cared to use him, acquired an ally more valuable than any he had yet encountered. By October James had left Ireland, and Marlborough was now dispatched thither to subdue and settle the country, which he did in a minimum of time and with none of the cruelty practised by his predecessors. William really was grateful—on paper—and bid Marlborough “rest assured that your conduct will induce me to confer on you still farther marks of my esteem and friendship on which you may always rely”.¹

But whether William was sincere or not in these protestations, events were occurring which disturbed the harmony of the relations of the Marlboroughs with the King and Queen. The immediate cause of the dissension was Anne, and the subject, Anne's income. Like most of the Stuarts, Anne was extravagant, though, as her household at the Cockpit was not an elaborate one, it was something of a mystery where her money went to. It is of course inevitable that the Duchess' detractors should have declared that much of it found its way to her. This may be true. There would be nothing remarkable if it were, though a later letter from Anne seems to disprove it.²

It is also certain that Anne gambled heavily and presumably lost as often as she won, if not more often. She had been allowed £32,000 a year by her father and yet he had twice had to pay her debts. There was a story that on the second occasion he had come unexpectedly into her apartments, and that Lady Churchill and Lady Fitzharding had only time

¹ Coxe.

² See p. 105.

to whisk themselves into a cupboard where they had to remain, scarcely daring to breathe, while the King kindly but firmly expostulated with the weeping Anne "Oh, madam," cried Sarah when he had gone, "this is the doing of that old rascal your uncle!"¹ Now there was another "rascal" at work on Anne's financial affairs, and once again Lady Marlborough was to take a hand. William had been allowed a Civil List of £600,000 a year, out of which Anne's income was to be paid. But William was not a Stuart, and William's heart was set on the defeat of his life-long enemy France, and for that money was needed and more money and yet again money. And so it seemed to him to be sinful to spend money on Anne which might be spent on the war (The argument has a familiar ring. William, wise man though he was, doubtless said that it was a war to end war.) Let us economise, said William, on Anne, why should she have a separate establishment when (metaphorically) all that I have is hers? But William was not renowned for generosity, and even if he had been, Anne was not prepared to live in dependence, a pensioner on his bounty, especially as she had done him a signal service. Besides, William had once eaten a whole dish of green peas in front of Anne, who was specially longing for some. Was this the table she was to share? At the instigation of the Marlboroughs, it was proposed to raise the question of her income in Parliament. Anne's position had been still further strengthened in July when a son had been born to her and had so far survived, and seemed likely to live. She was now, therefore, not only the heiress apparent, but the mother of the only child who gave hopes of a Protestant succession in the direct Stuart line. It seemed only reasonable that she should have a separate and independent income of her own. The Earl and Countess of Marlborough constituted themselves her champions, and as Marlborough himself was away most of that summer, the direction of the affair must have been chiefly undertaken by Sarah. This meant opposition to Mary, for relations between Anne and her sister had ceased to be cordial. Anne's initial opposition to the settlement was remembered against her and against her friend. There had

¹ Lord Rochester, Clarendon's brother, who was then Treasurer

been bickering over the Duchess of Portsmouth's apartments at Whitehall, promised to Anne and at first refused by Mary, and again over apartments near these which Anne wanted (one gathers, for Lady Marlborough), and which instead were first offered to the Earl of Devonshire. Anne had also asked for Richmond Palace, thinking its position healthy for her delicate baby. But the Villiers family were in possession and this was also refused. The sisters had little in common beyond Stuart obstinacy. The Duchess notes their different characters and humours. "It was indeed impossible," she writes, "they should be very agreeable companions to each other because Queen Mary grew weary of anybody who would not talk a great deal and the Princess was so silent that she rarely spoke more than was necessary to answer a question." Matters came to a head one evening in the Drawing-Room, when Mary asked Anne about the proposed proceedings in Parliament. "I hear," said Anne, "that my friends have a mind to make me some settlement." Mary was furious. "Pray," she said angrily, "what friends have you but the King and me?" Anne was frightened and resentful and came back and poured it all out to Sarah who was more than ever determined to secure what she was fighting for, Queen or no Queen. Parliament was prorogued to gain time, and realising who it was that counted at the Cockpit, ambassadors were sent to Sarah to try and persuade her to use her influence and make Anne let the matter drop. But Lady Marlborough's character was not so well known then as it came to be afterwards, else had the emissaries saved themselves the trouble of talking to her of self-interest, of caution, of expediency, once she had made up her mind. Any of these reasons might have deterred her from making bitter enemies of the King and Queen, and probably would have deterred a woman of less courage and determination. As she herself put it, "I knew the thing was reasonable, the Princess' happiness was concerned in it, and there was a fair prospect of succeeding." So she persisted.

Finally, in despair, they sent to her the King of Hearts himself. The Earl of Shrewsbury was one of the Secretaries of State and by his personal charm and graceful accomplish-

ments had gained that gallant title.¹ The interview must have been entertaining, for Shrewsbury could make no impression, charm he never so wisely. He offered £50,000 a year on the word of a king. Should it be broken, he vowed he would not serve William an hour. "Such a resolution," drily remarked the Countess, "may be very right for your lordship, but I do not see that it would be of any use to the Princess, if his Majesty should not perform the promise." Truly a lady with a biting tongue, and one untrammelled by timidity.

The last bolt had been shot and, when the matter did come up in Parliament, Anne's partisans carried the day and an income of £50,000 a year was settled on her. Lady Marlborough had triumphed once again.

William must have been peculiarly anxious for the affair to be kept out of Parliament to have offered as much as £50,000—for he had remarked to a lord of the Treasury that he could not understand how Anne managed to spend £32,000 a year. The remark was not directed to the most sympathetic quarter, for this particular lord of the Treasury happened to be a special friend of the Marlboroughs. The figure of Sidney Godolphin, whose life was to be bound up in a peculiarly intimate way with that of the Churchills, is both interesting and a little baffling. Like Sarah Churchill he had been bred to courts, having come from his ancient Cornish home as a page to Whitehall. Like Sarah too, his love-story had its birth and history at St. James'. It was the Diana of *Calisto* whom he loved—the beautiful Margaret Blagge whose pure, gentle and saintly spirit had shone so oddly in that worldly setting. Margaret loved him too—this grave, silent, reserved man who seemed to those who did not know him to be so cold, so impenetrable. At first she had thought herself wedded to a life of meditation and devotion, but Godolphin was patient and waited the flowering of her love. At last he was rewarded and on May 14th, 1674, they were married. But Margaret was to reach the heavenly kingdom she longed for sooner

than she had thought and Sidney Godolphin's life was to be left empty, for after little more than three years of perfect happiness, she died from giving birth to a son. Margaret Godolphin will not be forgotten though, for her memory has been kept green for us by one of her friends. The wise and gracious John Evelyn, out of his grief for her loss, made a book from the story of her life and her name is for ever enshrined in the pages of his *Life of Margaret Godolphin*. While the body of the woman he had loved so deeply made that last long journey down to Cornwall, Sidney Godolphin turned down the page of romance, locked away his tragedy out of sight, and threw himself more and more into his business of finance. Figures were cold and passionless. They did not tear out your heart or violate your privacy. A man could deal with money without emotion. As for politics, he disliked storms and feared them, and brought to the contemplation of political questions the same cold efficient reasoning that he employed in dealing with his estimates and supplies. His passions were not of the kind that led him into the quicksands of political strife, and in search of peace he had brought the art of non-committal tact to its highest point, even as a page. "Sidney Godolphin," King Charles had remarked, "is never in the way and never out of the way," and this instinctive judiciousness stood him in good stead in those troubled times. But he never quite succeeded in making himself into a machine. With the Stuarts and with Mary of Modena in particular, were bound up the youth which had died with Margaret Blagge, for Margaret had been maid of honour to the young Duchess of York. Godolphin could never efface that memory, and while his reason told him that James had forfeited all right to the throne, he stood by him to the last, voted for a Regency, and even when chosen by William as a lord of the Treasury, served the new King with his brain and not his heart.

Another figure remained with him from those early days at St. James'. The 'Mercury' of *Calisto* had been Sarah Jennings, who had also been a maid of honour to the Duchess, and who can tell what happy memories were associated with the beauty and gaiety of Lady Marlborough, or what comfort had come from the gentle tenderness of her husband? How

else shall we explain the love there was for nearly twenty-five years between Godolphin and the Marlboroughs? Of all women Sarah Churchill seems to have been his opposite. But it may be that, with memories of a youthful friendship binding him, her talk completed his silence, her gaiety his melancholy, her courage his timidity, her passion his coldness, and her downrightness his tact. They had some trivial tastes in common. He shared, curiously enough, with Anne a love for horses. In the old days at St James' it was only Godolphin and Monmouth who could drive Mary of Modena's swift horses in her sledge round St James' Park. Racing shared with cards and cock-fighting his self-contained leisure. There will be some to-day who, unwilling to converse of lord-treasurers and the like, will nevertheless greet the name *Godolphin Arabian* with reverent acclamation for his horse-owner, Sidney Godolphin—is the chief of the three from whom they say the breed of pure race horses is descended to this day. So, whatever he may or may not have done at the Treasury, honour must be paid to Sidney Godolphin.

He was a welcome guest at the Cockpit for he loved gambling as much as Anne and Sarah, and, we are told by Burnet, for the same reason as the former "because it delivered him from the obligation to talk much." Burnet's whole character of him, borne out as it is by other contemporaries, is worth quoting.

"He was one of the ablest men that belonged to the court (of Charles II). He was the silentest and modestest man that was perhaps ever bred in a court. He had a clear apprehension and dispatched business with great method, and with so much temper that he had no personal enemies but his silence has begot a jealousy that has hung long about him. He loved gaming the most of any man of business I ever knew. He had true principles of religion and virtue, and was free from all vanity and never heaped up wealth, so that all things being laid together he was one of the worthiest and wisest men that has been employed in our time."¹

We are not told what side Godolphin took in the dispute about the income. He was a Tory, and the Tories had, for purposes of their own, identified themselves with Anne's cause.

¹ *History*

Neither was he very likely openly to have opposed Lady Marlborough. At any rate, it was to him that she went for advice on a matter that came up soon after Anne's victory. Anne took her gratitude where gratitude was due, and Mrs. Freeman must share in the prosperity she had created. A shy, affectionate letter came from Mrs. Morley.

"I have had something to say to you a great while, and I did not know how to go about it.¹ I have designed, ever since my revenue was settled, to desire you would accept of a thousand pounds a year. I beg you would only look upon it as an earnest of my good will, but never mention anything of it to me; for I shall be ashamed to have any notice taken of such a thing from one that deserves more than I shall ever be able to return."

Lady Marlborough hesitated before accepting this generous offer though, as she says, the circumstances of her family were not at this time very great. "Yet," she adds, "I was so far from catching at so free and large an offer that I could not persuade myself to accept of it, till I had sent the first letter to Lord Godolphin and consulted him upon the matter. It was his opinion that there was no reason in the world for me to refuse it. And perhaps no one else will think otherwise who believes, as he did, that the settling of the Princess's revenue had been chiefly owing to my Lord Marlborough's indefatigable industry and to mine."

The gift was accepted then, and the bonds drawn closer still. And now it seemed as if the two friends, united together before against a father, were to be united once more, this time against a sister. Anne had found Sarah faithful and courageous through the storm of the Revolution, certain what was the right thing to do and ready to help Anne to do it. What would she do without Mrs. Freeman? She seemed to need her as much as ever now, for the peaceful dawn of pleasant security and happiness that had been heralded by the arrival of William and Mary had given place to a threat of tempest. The clouds had already gathered. But for the moment Anne was happy in spite of them. She had her George, she had the baby Duke of Gloucester and, above all, she had Lady Marlborough.

¹ This does not look as if Anne were in the habit of disbursing large sums to Sarah.

CHAPTER VII

RELATIONS between the Cockpit and Whitehall were certainly by now far from pleasant. Outward decorum was studiously observed by both sisters, each of whom set great store by it, but Anne's victory in Parliament had left Mary in a state of icy hostility. Things were not improved by the presence of a spy in the camp of the Princess. Lady Fitzharding seems at this moment to have owed a divided loyalty. She had been chosen by Lady Churchill to assist in the important matter of Anne's flight from the Cockpit, and Sarah herself owns to having had "a very singular affection for her", and spoke of her afterwards as a witty and entertaining woman—always a passport to Sarah's favour. "She was also," said Sarah, "more than anybody in the Queen's favour." Her position therefore qualified her for the post of ambassador, and she was used as such by Anne though she is usually credited¹ with having abused her position by repeating at Whitehall the often indiscreet gossip of the Cockpit. Whether this is true or not, it is impossible to say. Scandalous gossip is after all usually both anonymous and elusive. Lady Fitzharding, if she did not betray anybody, must have needed all her tact just now, for as well as being a friend both of Queen Mary and of Lady Marlborough,² she was sister to Elizabeth Villiers who was probably clever enough to extract what she wanted from her. And it cannot have helped to smooth matters when Mary and William were informed that Anne and Lady Marlborough were in the habit of alluding to the King in their private correspondence and in conversation by the names they had given him in derision in their girlhood when he came to Whitehall for his bride. It cannot be claimed

¹ It is so stated in Lord Dartmouth's notes to Burnet's *History*.

² She and Lady Marlborough were painted, playing cards together.

that the ladies in this affair displayed undue delicacy. His Majesty was referred to as the "Dutch Monster", sometimes even as "The Dutch Abortion", and in more poetical moments as "Caliban", for though innocent of any knowledge of Shakespeare, Anne and Sarah would both have seen *The Enchanted Island*, that travesty of *The Tempest* which had pleased Restoration audiences. So Mrs. Morley and Mrs. Freeman, ignorant that their jests and their spleen were sedulously reported to Whitehall, felt at liberty to indulge both. One of the links which might have held the sisters was Anne's baby. He had been living at Craven House, Kensington, where Mary was building a palace for her lord which should be near enough to town for business and yet (O happy times!) in country air for his asthma. The child was now installed in Campden House, conveniently near his aunt, but Mary, by confining her attentions exclusively and pointedly to her nephew, still further alienated and angered his mother and her supporters. The summer of 1690 saw the birth and death of yet another of Anne's poor little doomed babies.¹ Lady Marlborough was also at the same time to give birth to what was to prove the last of her children. Perhaps owing to her condition, perhaps depressed by Anne's recent sorrow, perhaps (though this is less likely) feeling the strain of the prolonged quarrel with the Queen, Sarah was oddly apprehensive when her time drew near. A few days before her confinement she actually made, on a sheet of note-paper and in her own handwriting, a will disposing of all the property she then possessed which at that time amounted to the not very extensive sum of £7,000. She divided it between her five children, but there is one bequest which tells us a little about the "stony-hearted, avaricious, self-centred" Duchess of Marlborough. £500 was to go to liberate poor debtors from prison—very nearly half what she had to leave each of her children. The horrors of the Marshalsea had not been lost upon my Lady Marlborough, and she was nothing if not practical. Her fears however proved happily groundless, and on July 25th she gave birth to a second son whom they called Charles after his uncle. But her peril was scarcely over when

¹ They were practically all born with hydrocephalus.

she needs must face another of those partings from her husband which were to be so frequent. Even Mary was moved to sympathy. "I must tell you," she writes to William on August 2nd, "that this morning Lord Marlborough went away; as little reason as I have to care for his wife yet I must pity her condition, having lain in but eight days; and I have great compassion for wives when their husbands go to fight." Marlborough had been one of the council of nine appointed to assist Mary in her task of governing the country in William's absence, but he now volunteered to go over to Ireland and carry on the war there while William's presence was demanded in England. But William very seldom did anything in England but prepare for war in Flanders, and the nation, the memory of past tyranny becoming dim, was beginning to wonder whether it had not paid dearly for its liberation with a King who drew so mercilessly upon English coffers and English manhood for the prosecution of what to them was a foreign war which had not even the redeeming feature of success. Neither had William any of those graceful arts which had enabled Charles II to waste the public money and keep the public affection. He surrounded himself with Dutch favourites to whom he gave high rank and large estates; he shut himself up in Hampton Court; he refused to ally himself unconditionally with any one party in the State, thus offending them all; his armies suffered defeat by land and his navies at sea, for he spent too much time in the field to be able to check the widespread corruption in the public services. His efforts at religious toleration were met with distrust and hostility from those to whom intolerance was synonymous with religious devotion. His political wisdom, his great and far-seeing statesmanship were lost upon the majority of his subjects who, as the ignorant always will, saw no further than the length of their own grasp. And so, when in April 1691 the ancient palace of Whitehall was largely destroyed by fire on the night of his return from Holland, there were not wanting those who saw in it a judgment of heaven. To the watchers at the Court of St. Germain the time seemed ripe. It was Godolphin they approached first. The Lord Treasurer was disgusted at public corruption, had protested against prodigal

expenditure, even on war, and was known to entertain feelings of personal affection if not for James, at least for Mary Beatrice, and he listened sympathetically. After Halifax had been tried, the next to be approached was Marlborough. His brilliant Irish campaign had been unrewarded. On William's return to England he had been left without a share in the government. The Garter, requested for him by Anne, had been refused, and although, in spite of the income dispute, he had by the exercise of his tact and charm contrived to remain until now on ostensibly good terms with the King and Queen, his wife had been involved in Anne's quarrels with Mary. Once more we are not concerned to discuss the motives which led Marlborough at this juncture to send James a letter in which he professed contrition for his former desertion, promised to further James' cause by his power with the army and (counting on his wife's influence for this) to bring Princess Anne back to her duty. The fact that at the same time he demanded a written pardon for himself, his wife and Lord Godolphin may give us the key to his actions. He was playing for safety, whichever side was to triumph. It was not such an unusual proceeding as we who have never experienced any such political conditions might be led to suppose. This was the age which produced the Trimmer, and as the popular song put it—

“ The times are so ticklish I vow and profess
 I know not which party or cause to embrace
 I'll side with those, to be sure, who are least in distress
Which nobody can deny.”¹

But William, who knew to a nicety how long he could safely keep his eyes shut, realised that here was a danger that must be dealt with, though the national situation was too critical and his own position too precarious for him to make the issue public. Mary and Mary alone was in his confidence. On January 9th at Mary's Drawing-Room, there was an altercation between Mary and Anne, over what we are not told, but we gather from Mary's journal that it concerned the loyalty of the Marlboroughs. On the following morning, when

¹ A Trimmer's Confession of Faith. 1694.

Marlborough had finished his Court duties, he was met by Lord Nottingham with the information that he was forthwith dismissed from all his employments and forbidden to appear at Court. The Duchess' account of this affair must be described as disingenuous. "The King was pleased," she says, "*without publicly assigning any particular reason* (the italics are ours) to remove my Lord Marlborough from all his employments."

She puts forward the theory that the reasons were Marlborough's dislike of the Earl of Portland, the King's most intimate friend, and the enmity felt for her by Elizabeth Villiers, "though I had never done her any injury except not making my court to her." There is of course no proof that she was privy to her husband's intrigues with the Court of St. Germains, and it is a matter of some difficulty to decide whether this was the case or not. On the whole, it seems improbable. Close as was the confidence between these two, Marlborough was quite capable of keeping from his wife anything he wished to remain a secret, and his plans were scarcely at this time far enough advanced to make her co-operation essential, and by admitting her to them he would be exposing her to very real danger. Sarah's hatred of Catholicism and tyranny, if no more sincere, was fiercer and more uncompromising than that of her husband. Also, we have her word that, as far as the Revolution was concerned, she "never once wished that the change had not been made". These words were written in 1742 and, although possibly anxious even then to clear herself of any suspicion of Jacobitism, it was after all not necessary to insert them in this connection, especially if they were untrue. On the whole then, although we must admit that, in the absence of any direct evidence either way, there is a possibility of her complicity, it seems more likely that she was, before it actually happened, ignorant of the real causes of her husband's dismissal (which were indeed a secret from everybody), though she can scarcely have been so when she wrote her "Conduct" in 1742.

Now indeed was there consternation at the Cockpit. Anne herself had been to some extent implicated and had written a letter to her father offering her "duty and submission"

and protesting that if wishes could recall what was past she had long since redeemed her fault. This of course may be taken as evidence that Sarah knew what was going on, but even this does not seem conclusive. Mary in her journal says that she does not believe Anne knew of the actual plot, and the letter itself is framed in nothing but the most general and personal terms. It holds out no promises of support and reads simply as what in effect it was—a personal expression of a private remorse, and a personal reconciliation is not the same thing as a political plot. Anne was after all sentimental; she had had plenty of time to forget her father's tyrannies, to weave a romantic halo round his misfortunes and to brood with the slow, deep-seated resentment characteristic of her on her treatment by William and Mary. She might even have reflected that she would be better off under James' restoration. And it is of course possible and even probable that Lady Marlborough knew of this letter, though the style of its composition while certainly not Anne's, is with equal certainty, not Sarah's.

It is scarcely possible to make any definite pronouncement on this point, and it is always difficult, reviewing events in the dry light of reason, to reconstruct and allow adequately for the passions that dictated them; it may be that in this affair as in other and later ones Sarah Churchill allowed her emotions to rule over her reason, and lent her aid to Jacobite intrigues. There may be conclusive evidence in the archives of Blenheim, but in its absence we can only indicate the arguments on both sides, based on the material available.

Whatever the reason, the edict had gone forth. Anne spent most of her time weeping, and the sight of her tear-stained countenance and woe-begone aspect, calculated as they were to gain her sympathy, considerably irritated the King and Queen. Matters came to a head on February 4th, Anne's birthday. Lady Marlborough had not unnaturally absented herself from Court since January 9th. "*Being turned out*," she observed, "*is something disagreeable to my temper*." But on February 4th she determined to attend the Princess to the Drawing-Room. This she tells us she did on the persuasion of her friends, particularly of Lord Godolphin—a state-

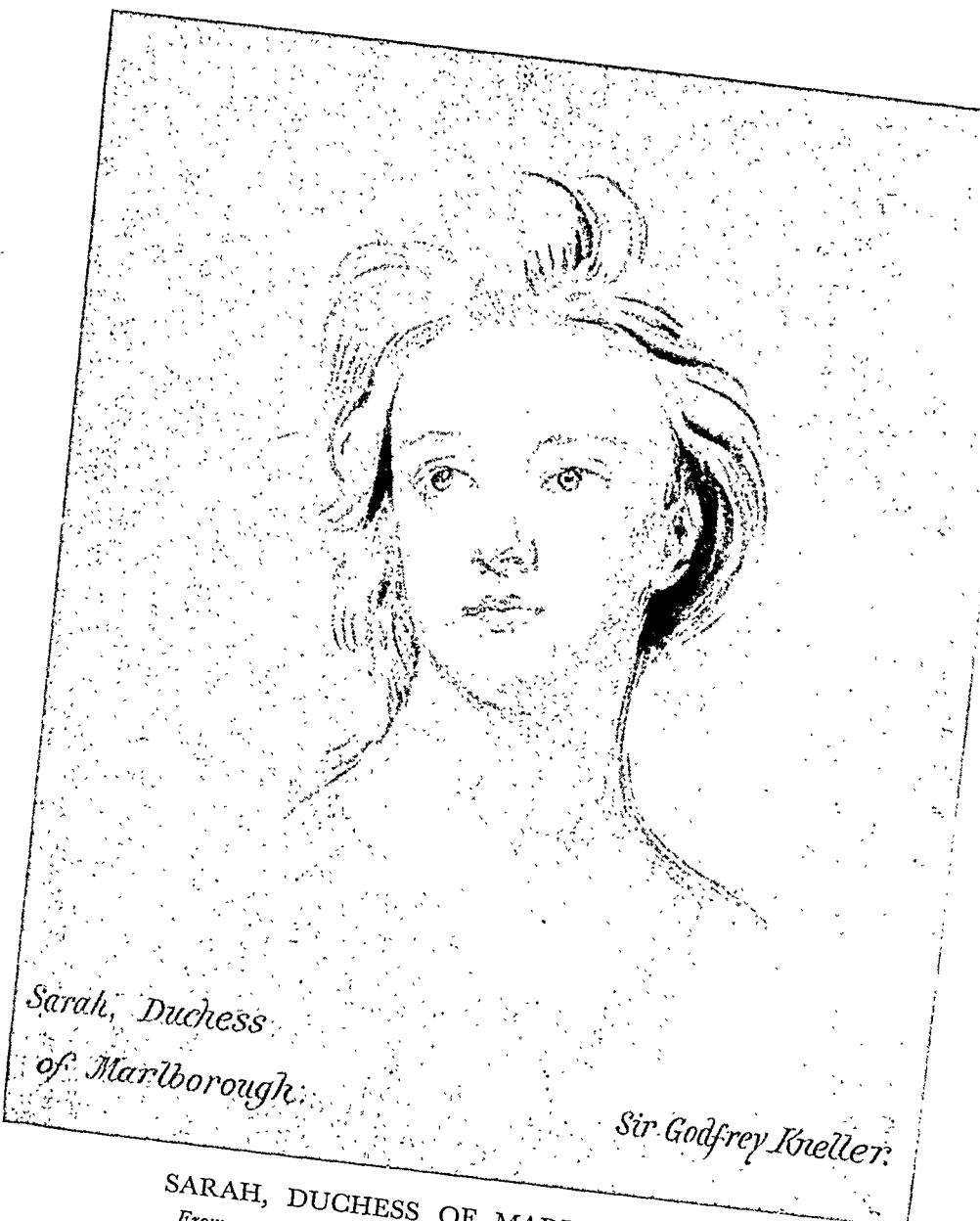
which must be accepted with caution. Whatever reasons her friends may have urged in favour of this very injudicious proceeding, it is, one feels, fairly safe to say that the reason which would count most with Sarah would be that only thus could she publicly show the Queen that her head was held as high as ever. Anne could always share the overplus of Sarah's courage, so on the evening of February 4th she made her appearance attended by the proud figure of my lady Marlborough. Mary, with a self-command that did her credit and which had been learned in a hard school, refrained from any exhibition of the anger she quite justly felt at this deliberate breach of decorum, and after what must have been an evening of considerable tension the two returned home, Anne relieved and Sarah flushed with victory. The next morning brought disillusionment. Mary made her commands plain in a letter.

"I hope you do me the justice to believe it is much against my will that I now tell you that after this¹ it is very unfit Lady Marlborough should stay with you since that gives her husband so just a pretence of being where he ought not.

I think I might have expected you should have spoke to me of it. And the King and I both believing it, made us stay thus long. But seeing you was so far from it that you brought Lady Marlborough hither last night, makes us resolve to put it off no longer but tell you she must not stay, and I have all the reason imaginable to look upon your bringing her as the strangest thing that ever was done. . . .

But now I must tell you it was very unkind in a sister, would have been very uncivil in an equal, and I need not say I have more to claim which though my kindness would make me never exact, yet when I see the use you would make of it I must tell you I know what is due to me and expect to have it from you. 'Tis upon that account that I tell you plainly Lady Marlborough must not continue with you in the circumstances her lord is. I know this will be uneasy to you and I am sorry for it. . . . For I would

¹ Lord Marlborough's dismissal.



*Sarah, Duchess
of Marlborough*

Sir Godfrey Kneller

SARAH, DUCHESS OF MARLBOROUGH

From a painting by SIR GODFREY KNELLER at Althorp

By permission of EARL SPENCER

have made myself believe your kindness for her made you at first forget that you should have for the king and me, and resolved to put you in mind of it myself, neither of us being willing to come to harsher ways. But the sight of Lady Marlborough having changed my thoughts does naturally alter my style. And since by that I see how little you seem to consider what even in common civility you owe us, I have told it you plainly. . . . ”

What was to be done now? Could a royal command be flouted? Anne, fortified by the knowledge of her former victory and as always, willing to dare anything for Mrs. Freeman, decided on defiance. In her answer she affirmed Lady Marlborough's innocence, protested that to part with her would be the greatest mortification in the world to her and stated quite clearly that there was no misery she could not readily resolve to suffer rather than the thoughts of parting with her. This letter (in which Sarah's hand is traceable) having been concocted, Lord Rochester, the Princess' uncle, was selected as its bearer. But Rochester would have nothing to do with these royal squabbles. The times were too ticklish; his brother Clarendon had paid for his interference by imprisonment in the Tower; he himself would keep out of it. The affair was too delicate to be entrusted to anyone but an intimate, so the letter was finally dispatched in the ordinary way by a royal servant, and the friends waited in suspense for what would come next.

What did come was a curt official command delivered through the Lord Chamberlain, Nottingham. The Earl and Countess of Marlborough were to leave the Cockpit immediately. It was Stuart against Stuart, doggedness against obstinacy. Anne was urged from all quarters to sacrifice her friend. George, faithful kindly soul, alone refused to press it, saying that he cared for her too much to do so. Sarah herself, to do her justice, tried to persuade the Princess to give way and let her go. For this we have Anne's word as well as her own. But Anne almost had hysterics at the very idea. “She fell,” says Sarah, “into the greatest passion of tenderness and weeping it was possible to imagine.” She declared that if

Mrs. Freeman were so cruel as to leave her she would be robbed of all the joy and quiet of her life; that she would never enjoy a happy minute but would shut herself up and never see a creature. She begged her, for God's sake, never to mention parting more, no, nor so much as think of it, for if Mrs. Freeman ever left her it would break her heart. As in the flight from Whitehall, all Anne's most characteristic emotions were called into play by the situation Mary had created. Her love for Sarah now became a romantic martyrdom—Anne always wanted romance—her dignity was outraged, her resentment inflamed, and her obstinacy more dogged than ever. Very well then. If Mrs. Freeman was to be forced to leave the Cockpit she must do so. But Anne would go too, for to live without Mrs. Freeman was unthinkable. Let them turn her out of her own house. That was a small thing to suffer for the friend who had stood so faithfully by her. But her confinement was near and she must have a suitable refuge, since the royal palaces were denied her. The Duchess of Somerset was approached. Would it be possible for her residence of Sion House at Brentford to be put at the disposal of her Royal Highness? The Duchess consulted her husband, and it was intimated that his grace felt himself honoured by her Highness' selection. Their Majesties, uncomfortably astonished at the turn affairs were taking, tried to dissuade him from his intention, hoping perhaps by this means to force Anne to remain at Whitehall. But not for nothing was his grace of Somerset called the "proud duke". His Majesty was courteously but quite firmly informed that the guests to whom the Duke chose to give shelter were his grace's own affair and did not admit of scrutiny by anyone. So William and Mary had to stand by and watch while Anne's household, including the faithful George, was transported to Sion House, a beautiful Tudor mansion at Brentford with grounds sloping to the river. It lay moreover convenient for the coach journey from St. Albans, but in mid-February it needs must have been a little desolate and chill. Hither then journeyed Anne to await her time and with her went Lady Marlborough, "for whom she showed," says Mary,¹ "much

¹ Journal.

passion and kindness". The whole town buzzed with excitement and gossip. "The business of the Cockpit makes much noise," wrote Lord Rous to Lord Coningsby on February 16th.¹ From Sion House on April 17th there came a message to Mary. Anne's hour had come, and even in her pain she was mindful of the royal etiquette which decreed that the birth of her children, being as they were in the direct line of succession, was a State affair. The springs of humanity were indeed dried up in Mary. The Princess's message said that she felt very ill indeed, "much worse than was usual with her". But not even at this supreme moment, when political jealousies and personal quarrels might well be laid aside between two women, was Mary able to forget what had passed and hurry to the bedside of a sister in travail. The hours wore on at Sion House, and still there came no word from the Queen who was queen first and woman after. At last Anne's suffering was over, and weak and spent, she heard the cry of her son. There was just time to baptise him before he went his way to join the row of little coffins which represented Anne's motherhood. Let Mary come now or not, as she pleased. But etiquette must still be observed, and a Dutch lady-in-waiting was dispatched to Whitehall with the tidings of birth and death. Mary came—at her leisure. She came not with compassion or with comfort. She did not take Anne's hand or kiss her cheek. She spoke no word of the tiny corpse in the next room. She said, "I have made the first step by coming to you and I now expect you should make the next by removing Lady Marlborough"—as if the two matters were on the same plane. Anne had just strength enough to refuse. Mary swept from the room without another word, ignoring even poor Prince George, who did his duty by seeing her to her coach. This was their final parting, for the sisters never saw each other again. The agitation of this scene brought its inevitable consequences, and Anne in high fever hung for many days between life and death. Scarcely was she out of danger than another blow fell, this time on the adored Mrs. Freeman. On May 5th Lord Marlborough was committed to the Tower on the forged evidence of one Robert Young, who, with the aid of a

¹ Rutland MSS. H.M.C.

confederate, arranged to have letters to James II purporting to come from Marlborough, discovered in a flower-pot in the house of Thomas Sprat, Bishop of Rochester. Sarah flew to town, moved heaven and earth for her husband's release, and was only prevented from joining him in the Tower by representations that she would be more valuable outside it. She visited him on May 10th, 20th and 24th¹, and was soon able to write to Anne that the letters were proved to be the forgeries of Young, who, as the Duchess afterwards ironically remarked, "not having lost his ears²" was deemed by the lawyers an irreproachable witness. But there were delays in her husband's release, and Sarah, who cared more for him than for anything on earth, grew depressed and almost fearful, and began to suffer in health from the suspense and anxiety. Anne wrote lovingly to her almost every day. "For God's sake have a care of your dear self", she writes, "and give as little way to melancholy thoughts as you can." She journeyed to London especially to see Sarah, leaving the time, day and place entirely to her, and declared that, could she only be with her she would be content to live for ever on bread and water between four walls. But poor Sarah was now to be beyond the reach even of these consolations. News came from St Albans that the little son was ill—the Charles who had been born two years before, and on May 22nd Anne, who had trodden that terrible road before her, had to write her loving sympathy to the friend who had lost her child. They must have been black weeks for Sarah Churchill, left without her husband to face a sorrow that only he could have comforted, for the love between these two burnt still as brightly as it had done fifteen years before when they had been wedded at St James'. There is a tiny fragment of letter which must date from this time which alone has survived of all Sarah's letters to her husband. It is only a sentence, but it tells us all we need to know. "Wherever you are," she wrote, "whilst I have life, my soul shall follow you, my ever dear Lord Marl, and wherever I am I should only kill the time wishing for night that I may sleep and hope the next day to hear from you." Colonel Churchill had indeed won his Sarah. To her

¹ *State Papers Dom* May 1692² The usual punishment for sedition.

children, although the circumstances of her life made it impossible for her, even had she been so inclined, to devote a large portion of her time to them, she was after her tempestuous fashion a loving if slightly incalculable mother, and Burnet notes how careful she was over their welfare and education. A little note to Lady Longueville, written from St. Albans at about this time, indicates quite clearly her concern and practical care for them. It runs:—

I came to this place in a great fright this morning, hearing that one of my children was sick, and by the description they gave me of her I concluded that it was the smallpox, but before I came to her she was quite well and I am very well content to have made an unnecessary journey, for when servants are so careful as to apprehend every little thing and give one notice of it, one thinks oneself very secure, though one is bound to be often from them.

After various legal disputes in which William clearly showed his hostility to Marlborough, he was finally released on June 15th, when the battle of the Hague against James II with its decisive victory for William seemed to put it for the moment out of his power to endanger William's throne by plotting with James. The Earl and Countess retired once more to St. Albans, except for such time as they devoted to the Princess Anne. The splendid hopes of 1688 seemed to have ended in disappointment and obscurity.

CHAPTER VIII

IN the summer of 1692 when Anne was convalescent, she went to Bath attended by Lady Marlborough to complete her recovery. The breach between her and the King and Queen was now complete, and it had been intimated that to visit at Sion House was to incur the displeasure of Whitehall. Their Majesties did not think it beneath them to stoop to petty persecutions on points of etiquette. Sarah noticed with indignation at Bath that the Mayor and Corporation did not attend Anne to Church as was customary. It seemed that his worship had had a specific order from the Lord Chamberlain not to do so, on pain of their Majesties' displeasure. Anne declared herself indifferent to these petty slights and bid Sarah not allow herself the spleen over them. When she returned to town the royal wrath still pursued her, this time with an order that Dr. Birch, the clergyman of the newly-built church of St. James' in Piccadilly which the Princess attended, should not, as a mark of respect, place upon the cushion of her pew a copy of the text from which he proposed to preach. But the worthy cleric refused to show this courtesy without a written order, which was not forthcoming. So Anne had her text in comfort. Unlike most of the Stuarts, Anne loved sermons. Charles II used to say that all his family could sleep through a sermon, "which is great a ease to those bound to hear them", but Anne could remain awake and interested through the longest of them. An odd little sidelight on Sarah's church-going habits is given us by one of her letters to Lady Bathurst.¹ Unlike Anne, she seems to have disliked forms and ceremonies in a church, and refusing Lady Bathurst's invitation to accompany her to the church at Kensington she adds, "At that church one shall see a great many people I know,

¹ H.M.C. Bathurst MSS.

and if I could, I would always go to my devotions where I could meet no one of my acquaintance."

The loan of Sion House had been only temporary and Anne, who considered the Cockpit still closed to her, now took for her residence Berkeley House, which was then in the still rural end of Piccadilly for there were then no houses beyond the junction of St. James' and Hyde Parks. Berkeley House had been built in 1672 by John Berkeley the friend of Evelyn, on ground which had previously been occupied by Hay-hill Farm—the memory of which survives in the name of adjacent streets to-day. Evelyn notes after dining there on August 12th, 1672, that it was very well built and had many noble rooms, that the staircase was of cedar and the furniture princely. He is specially enthusiastic about the gardens, which he says were incomparable and in the laying out of which he has assisted. Here then the Princess settled and here Lord and Lady Marlborough were assigned beautiful apartments, between which and Holywell House they spent their time. Anne offered the Earl £1000, a year, intending to create for him a place in her household, for the loss of all his employments meant that his chief sources of income were now gone. The offer was gratefully but firmly refused.

Some few visitors still dared to come to Berkeley House, for Anne's treatment by her sister and brother-in-law was far from being popularly approved. Criticism even rose to indignation when Anne's guards were taken away. They were in fact something more than a decorative adjunct. This was the age of highwaymen and the condition of the roads was such that an escort for coaches was an absolute necessity. Even in 1736 Lord Hervey wrote from Kensington in the winter, "We live in the same solitude as we should do if cast on a rock in the middle of the ocean and all Londoners tell us between them and us there is a great impassable gulf of mud."

Robberies even on this road so close to the town were numerous, and the condition of the roads out of town was beyond description. The causeways usually consisted of unbroken or badly broken stones, carelessly flung down and forming a sort of moraine, and the soft track on either side was

made almost equally impassable by mud. When repaired a cartload of earth was thrown over it, but the first fall of rain made it worse. Lady Marlborough's journey to St Albans took three hours by coach over this kind of road. On the road between Hoddesden and Ware, in Hertfordshire, Thoresby writes,¹ "A most pleasant road in summer and as bad in winter because of the depth of the cart-ruts." Barnet Heath, through which coaches had to go to St Albans, was a notorious resort of highwaymen whose robberies were very often accompanied by violence, and at this very time (November, 1692) Evelyn notes that the taxes were robbed by highwaymen on the Hertford road. When on one of her journeys Anne's coach was attacked and robbed, public feeling expressed itself quite clearly in squibs and lampoons, ironically charging the night watchman—"Ye are to take care of thieves and robbers, but waive that part of your duty to the princess, for since her guards are taken off, she is neither to be regarded by day, or guarded by night. Anyone is to rob her who may choose to be at the trouble."²

Apart from public gossip, the little court at Berkeley House lived almost in obscurity. Lady Marlborough devoted herself as before, partly to Anne and partly to her children and household at St Albans. Anne was a frequent visitor to Holywell House, and the younger Churchill children went sometimes to play with the little duke who was growing up at Kensington. For the rest, basset and ombre still took up much time, there were visits to the playhouse for which amusing and indecorous comedies by Congreve were being written. Something they called opera had recently been introduced by Purcell and Dryden, and the town flocked to hear it. Purcell had always been duly attentive to Anne and her household, writing songs for her marriage and for Prince George's return from Denmark as became a Court musician. There was a vogue for fancy-work too—Mary and her ladies made miles and miles of very ugly knotted fringe and were much commended for their virtue in so doing. The ladies at Berkeley House fell victims to the craze, and the famous "knotting song" of Sir Charles Sedley, who was one of the

¹ Diary² Strickland, quoted from the Lansdowne Papers

few courtiers there, dates from this time. There exists at Madresfield Court, a bed-quilt said to have been worked together by the Princess Anne and the Lady Marlborough. Anne's passion for her friend was as strong if not stronger than ever during these shadowed years. She writes thus in 1693 in acknowledgment of a present from Sarah:—

Ten thousand thanks for the dear ring which methinks is very pretty. When I have once got it on my finger we will never part—and oh that my dear Mrs. Freeman would imagine how much I value any mark of her favour—but that's impossible.¹

Lord Marlborough continued his advances to the Court of St. Germain—with what degree of sincerity it is impossible to say, and as things were at present he was trusted neither by William nor by James, though neither was powerful enough to ignore him.

Events went on thus for the next two years until on December 22nd there came sudden news from the palace that the Queen was ill. Gossip was carried by servants and conflicting rumours came one by one to Berkeley House. Her Majesty had smallpox. The doctors disagreed, Radcliffe diagnosing her complaint as measles and Millington as smallpox. She grew worse. She was better. Finally there came to be no doubt. Mary had been stricken with confluent smallpox—the disease in its worst form—and there was no hope. The prevalence of smallpox at this time resembled the incidence of influenza to-day and the doctors were just as powerless to deal with it. The woman,² who was to come to their aid, and in spite of their bitter opposition establish the practice of inoculation, was as yet only a child, and the terrible disease continued to exact its heavy toll. Anne had herself had it in her girlhood and therefore need not fear infection. She sent at once, offering to go and see Mary. She was told that the Queen was not in a condition to receive any visitors. Lady Derby's letter, however, addressed to Lady Fitzharding, contained the following postscript. "Pray Madam, present

¹ Blenheim MSS. quoted in H.M.C. ² Lady Mary Wortley Montague.

my humble duty to the Princess." Now, Lady Derby had been one of the ladies attendant on Mary when she paid that never-to-be-forgotten visit to Anne in childbed, and, unlike the other lady-in-waiting, she had followed her royal mistress' example in leaving the room without a word of farewell to the sick Princess. Sarah's comment on the postscript is characteristically trenchant. "This civil answer and my lady Derby's postscript made me conclude more than if the College of Physicians had told it me, that the disease was mortal." And so it proved, for after much suffering Mary died on December 28th, estranged from her father, wronged by her husband, and the word of peace between her and her sister still unspoken.

The situation now with regard to the succession made it in the highest degree desirable that there should be at least a semblance of cordiality between the King and the heiress to the throne. So, through the intervention of Lord Somers, William and Anne had an interview in which with mutual tears for Mary they patched up some kind of reconciliation, and Anne was assigned that part of St James' Palace usually occupied by the heir-apparent. William never really could stand either Anne or George, and he certainly did not go out of his way to be polite to them as the Duchess indignantly chronicles. Anne was often treated not only with want of ceremony, but with downright rudeness, and her husband no less. She seems to have borne it all philosophically. After all, she was victor on the main point. She had kept Lady Marlborough, and he would be a bold man now who would venture to try and dislodge her. The courtiers came flocking back, and if they were assiduous in paying their court to Anne, we may believe that they were no less attentive to the lady who was known to have such remarkable power over her royal highness. Nevertheless, Anne as a political entity was entirely and not unnaturally ignored by William, and Evelyn noted in his diary on July 6th, 1695 how he dined with Archbishop Tenison and discoursed "chiefly of the Princess of Denmark and her making so little figure." William's victory at Namur had turned the European tide of war in his favour, and he would not hear of restoring Marlborough to any of the offices

he had formerly held, which was not altogether surprising. Jacobite intrigues were still rife, and of all the noblemen surrounding William it was perhaps only his Dutch favourites that he could entirely trust. So the circle at St. James' went on very much as before, with perhaps a little more ceremony and amusement. We find one of Anne's entertainments described as being of great magnificence. "The ball at the Princess Anne's Court this night . . . I am told ther has not for many years bin seen so much fin clothes and rich liveries as there will appear this night. The Princess' manteau and petycoat cost a thousand pounds and the trimming of her petycoat five hundred. The Duke of Norfolk in scarlet embroidered with gold and the Duke of Southampton in black embroidered in silver."¹ Anne gave concerts and balls for William on his birthdays. Foreign envoys were presented to her as a matter of course. But as far as sharing in the government went, she and her favourites were forced to take only spectators' parts and talk at home over the campaigns in Flanders, the captures of French privateers, the reform of the currency, the rise and freedom of newspapers and the founding of the Bank of England—all matters of moment that took place during these years. But in 1697 the peace of Ryswick was signed and Louis pledged himself to support William on the throne, and Anne and her attendants, as they watched the flames of the huge bonfire in St. James' Square, must have realised that for the moment at any rate the time was over for Jacobite intrigues.

The year 1698 began with disaster. The palace of Whitehall was once more devastated by fire, this time so completely that the Banqueting Hall alone remained and alone remains to this day to give any idea of its former glories. Henceforth the royal courts were to be held at St. James' and Kensington, with summer residence at Windsor and Hampton Court. Anne spent much of her time at Campden House. Her son was now ten years old and considered of a ripe enough age to have his own establishment. Ernestly solicited by Anne, William, who first offered the post to Shrewsbury, finally consented to allow Lord Marlborough to be nominated

¹ Verney Letters.

as the child's governor, though he much irritated her by appointing Burnet, whom Anne detested, as his tutor. The boy was intelligent and precocious, though physically delicate, being affected, like all Anne's children, with water on the brain. The education of the heir to the throne has too often been marked by great injudiciousness and Gloucester was no exception. The poor child was to be a pattern of all possible virtues, accomplishments and attainments. The list of his studies given by Burnet reads more like an advanced university curriculum than the lessons of a child of ten. William was fond of him in his dry, undemonstrative way. The boy's passion for soldiering amused him; toy cannon and swords found their way from Kensington to Campden House, and Windsor was the scene of many a mock battle when Sarah's only son came over from Eton to play with the young Prince. Anne of course adored him, but curiously enough did not spoil him. To Englishmen he was the repository of all their hopes—the Prince who would bring them English and Protestant kings, and great were the rejoicings on his eleventh birthday on July 25, 1700. Perhaps the excitement and ceremonies were too much for him, already suffering from disease and over-strained by well-meaning tutors. The next day he felt ill, and was declared to have scarlet fever. Radcliffe, the most intelligent and eminent physician of the day, was sent for. He was no friend to Anne, but he came and, finding that the child had been bled according to the preposterous medical conventions of the time which decreed that treatment for any and every disease, threw up the case, saying that there was now no hope. Anne was stunned. She nursed her son tenderly and skilfully like an automaton and when on July 30th the little body lay lifeless before her, never shed a tear—she whose tears were used to come so easily. At this terrible moment her heart turned with more sincerity than perhaps ever before to her father, and she sat down and wrote to him. She was haunted by the thought that as she had sinned as a child, she was to be punished as a mother, an obsession which we may believe Sarah of Marlborough did her best to dispel.

Sarah and her husband were at Althorp in Northamptonshire, the seat of Lord Sunderland, when the news came of

the Duke's illness. They hurried to Windsor, but in those days of coaches and postboys arrived only in time to see the end. Marlborough superintended the burial ceremonies, riding beside the boy's coffin as it was borne at night by torchlight from Windsor to Westminster to lie in state, leaving Sarah behind to try and comfort the mother now left childless. Anne remained at Windsor until October when she was persuaded to leave it and its tragic memories, and go to Lady Marlborough's house at St. Albans.

The family at Holywell House were indeed growing up. Henrietta had been married in 1690. Her husband was none other than Margaret Blagge's son—the Francis she had left behind, and who was now to knit still closer the bonds between his father Godolphin and the Churchills. They were all lovely, these daughters of the beautiful Sarah Jennings and "handsome Jack Churchill." To this we have much contemporary testimony—Colley Cibber's amongst the rest. Writing of the Revolution, he says, "I remember above twenty years after when the same lady had given the world four of the loveliest daughters, their still lovely mother had at the same time her votaries and her health often took the lead in these involuntary triumphs of beauty."¹

Now it was a question of the marriage of Anne, the second and some said the most lovely of the four. Anne was the peacemaker—"as sweet a creature as ever was seen" said one of the Princess's servants.² She loved and understood her mother better than the others, better certainly than Henrietta who had inherited a share of her mother's temper as well as of her looks. Now Anne was to be married to Charles, Lord Spencer, the son of one of Sarah's friends—the Lady Sunderland whose wit and levity had so often shocked the Princess Anne and of whose large share in Lady Marlborough's affections she had been so jealous. The young man was not attractive, and at first Anne's father and mother did not look on the marriage, proposed and urged by the Sunderlands, with favour. Lord Spencer was but recently a widower, his political opinions might lead him into trouble being violently republican and expressed without either tact or grace in season and

¹ *op. cit.*

² *Jenkin Lewis, Life of the Duke of Gloucester.*

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out of season. His intelligence was very great and his personal charm very small. The Countess was the first to give way. Violent republicanism and a tendency to express one's opinions regardless of one's audience were not faults which appeared to her so heinous as they might to more politic natures. Also, she sympathised with his hatred of the Church of Rome, though not perhaps so much with his passion for collecting books. Her chief objection to him seems to have been that he did not love her daughter enough. In a letter written in 1725 to Lord Chesterfield she remarked of marriage: "I think that when the affection is grounded upon good reason it cannot be too soon, but if one marries from custom and for posterity only, I think I should delay that heavy yoke as long as I could."

She had married for love herself, and wanted her children to do the same. But when his mother assured her that Anne's beauty and sweetness had really won his heart, and his father promised that he should be ruled by Marlborough in all things political (a rash promise that), she finally gave way and persuaded her husband to consent to the marriage.

Whatever the Princess Anne may have thought about the marriage of her god-daughter with Lady Sunderland's son—who had never pleased her—she did not allow it to stifle her generosity. She had been generous over Henrietta's marriage, which, from a worldly point of view, had not been particularly desirable, for Lord Godolphin had resigned his Treasurer-ship in 1696 and was not the kind of man to have made any money at the public expense. But Anne had written—

"I have a request to make to my dear Mrs. Freeman. It is that whenever dear Lady Hariotte marries you would give me leave to give her something to keep me in her thoughts. . . . I beg my poor mite may be accepted, being offered from a heart that is without any reserve, with more passion and sincerity my dear Mrs. Freeman's than any other can be capable of."

The proffered "mite" was £10,000. But the Earl and Countess (whose one idea, they say, was money) not content

with marrying their daughter to a relatively poor man, would only accept half this magnificent offer. It was, however, accepted with real gratitude, as Anne's answer to Sarah's letter of acceptance shows:—

"My dear Mrs. Freeman," she wrote, "has no reason to be uneasy that she can never do enough to deserve my kindness, for she has done more than ever any mortal did to merit another's friendship. And it is very kind in setting so great a value upon so poor an expression as I have made of my truth. . . . But as long as I live I must be endeavouring to show that never anybody had a sincerer passion for another than I have for dear Mrs. Freeman."

When the marriage between Lady Anne and Lord Spencer was finally concluded, the Princess made the same generous provision to which Anne's father added a like amount. So Anne and her curious lover were married in January 1700, and the chain of political alliances was extended and strengthened.

Marlborough was now once more a privy councillor and it looked as if his services would once more be required abroad. All Europe had recently been concerned over the succession to the Spanish throne, one of the heirs to which was Louis XIV's grandson Philip. The occupation of the Spanish throne by a Bourbon was a contingency that all other European nations were concerned to avoid. Louis was quite powerful enough as it was, and no one felt that more strongly than William. He had devoted much time, diplomacy and trouble to making an arrangement which should satisfy Louis without running any risk of uniting the crowns of Spain and France, and they had finally decided that the heir was to be the Electoral Prince of Bavaria. But the Electoral Prince upset this arrangement by dying as soon as it was concluded, and as the half-witted, moribund occupant of the Spanish throne was also pronounced to be dying, the situation was critical indeed. William saw his life-work in jeopardy. A Bourbon on the throne of Spain would, he thought, mean that France with her Catholic tyranny would soon be supreme in Europe.

and for England, with the small Protestant states she supported including the Holland he loved, nothing would be left but vassalage more complete than any that had been threatened under Charles II and the Treaty of Dover. Louis, moreover, still harboured the deposed King of England, though by the Treaty of Ryswick he had definitely recognised William as King and promised to send James and his court as far afield as Avignon. So another treaty was made in which the succession was to devolve upon the Archduke Charles, second son of the Emperor Leopold of Austria. Then the King of Spain actually did die, and it was found that he had left a will in which he bequeathed the whole of the Spanish dominions, rich in colonies and untapped sources of wealth, to Philip, Duke of Anjou, grandson of Louis XIV of France. But Louis had bound himself by solemn treaty to renounce the rights of his grandson to the throne of Spain, and to support those of the Archduke Charles.

The Will or the Treaty? Which would he stand by? The Spaniards themselves were not consulted, and for Englishmen the question was almost an academic one. They did not see, as William did, the danger to the Spanish Netherlands which, under other than French domination, would always form a barrier between France and Holland, and, beyond Holland, England. Sick to death of war they had just disbanded half the army, and a Catholic and despotic domination of Europe by France was to them nothing but a bogey. Louis was jubilant. In 1701 his grandson entered Madrid and Louis announced grandiloquently, if not quite accurately, that there were no more Pyrenees. William, lonely, deadly ill, sick at heart, felt himself beaten and with bitter prescience watched Louis garrison the fortresses in the Spanish Netherlands with French troops in the name of his grandson. This was the ground that English blood and English treasure had been spilled so lavishhly to secure. No one seemed to care. William felt that the death he now knew to be imminent could not come too soon.

And then fate, which had played odd tricks with William, Prince of Orange, determined to take a hand in the last scene. Short though his days were, another King was to precede

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stood helpless round his bed at Kensington, and messengers, vulture-like, were dispatched one by one to Anne as his breath grew shorter and shorter—a detail that Sarah Churchill noted with horror. She had had no love for William; but what he now stood for, she stood for with all her heart. Could William but have known it, his cherished plans, now at the moment of his death, were safest in the hands of the woman he had held in enmity.

At last it was all over. The King was dead. . . . He had left the Treasury to Godolphin, the Throne to Anne, and the Army to Marlborough. And behind those three, holding in her hands their love and their homage, stood Sarah Churchill.

CHAPTER IX

“**S**HE can wait in patience for a sunshine day.” So Mrs. Morley to Mrs. Freeman from Sion House. The sunshine day dawned bright and clear on the Sunday morning of March 8th 1702, when Bishop Burnet arrived hotfoot from Kensington to St. James’ with news of King William’s death. Courtiers thronged in the ante-chambers, each one eager to say a word of homage and flattery to the new Queen who, shy, embarrassed and tongue-tied, hardly knew how to respond to them. Gone were the old empty days at Berkley House and St. James’, when the Princess of Denmark and Lady Marlborough made fringe together. All was hurry and bustle. Parliament was waiting to welcome Queen Anne, and thither on March 11th she journeyed in state; and the rising stars were plain to see, for the lady standing in attendance behind the throne was Sarah of Marlborough and it was my lord Marlborough who carried the Sword of State before her Majesty. Blushing with shyness, but her sweet voice clear as ever, Anne sent her first message to her people. Her heart, she said, was “entirely English”. Poor Dutch William, lying dead at Kensington! But William’s work was to be carried on, and for once Anne found that her wishes and his could chime together. The armies of England were leaderless, and Louis XIV of France had offered the Queen of England a mortal insult. Marlborough should avenge it and make the throne of Anne safe for Protestantism as by law established. In the first week of her reign Anne had remembered an old request which had been refused. But she was Queen now and could do what she chose for those she loved. No honour could be too high for Mrs. Freeman’s husband, and the Garter which the King had refused the Princess of Denmark for the Earl of Marlborough was bestowed on him by Queen

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Anne, and the following day the *London Gazette* announced that the Earl of Marlborough, K.G., had been appointed to serve her Majesty as Captain-General of the English forces at home and abroad. William could sleep in peace.

And what of Mrs. Freeman? The shadowed years were over, and who should share the sunshine but the friend who had been faithful in adversity? Sarah must have the posts which would bring her most in contact with her royal mistress. She should be Groom of the Stole, Mistress of the Robes and Keeper of the Privy Purse—no less. For the benefit of any who may possibly not be familiar with the subject, it may be explained that the "Stole" is a narrow vest lined with crimson sarcenet, embroidered with roses, fleurs-de-lys and crown. The office of Groom to it was, as may be deduced, a sinecure but a desirable one, and a contemporary of King James assures us "the Groom of the Stole is an officer which hath the best diet in court drest in the King's own kitchen in the best manner".

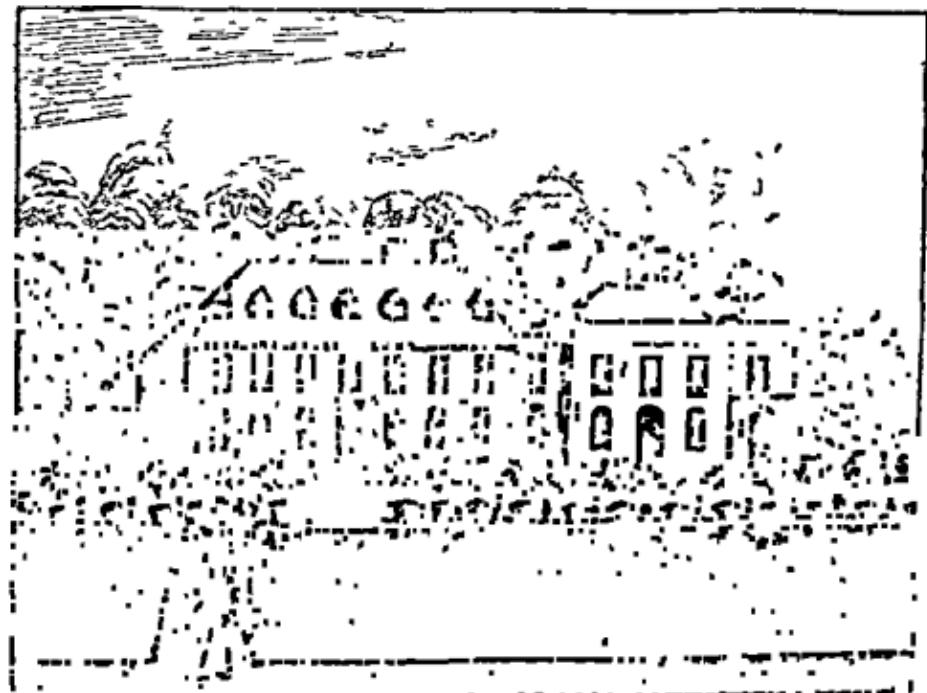
The other two posts were far from being sinecures, entailing as they did the administration of and accounting for large sums of money, the supervising of endless detail and the distribution of much patronage. The joint salaries of all three posts came, the Duchess tells us, to £5,600 a year. The Earl and Countess of Marlborough were now wealthier than they had ever thought to be. But one source of revenue which had been enjoyed by her predecessors was not Lady Marlborough's. "At that time," says the Duchess, "no person who was in any office at Court with places at his disposal, made any more scruple of selling them than of receiving his settled salary or the rents of his estate." Lady Churchill had already had some small experience of such customs in the household of the Princess of Denmark. Whether or not we accept her assertion that at a very early stage she resolved to discontinue this practice as far as she herself was concerned, there can be no doubt that the public step which was taken on the matter very soon after the Queen's accession would not have been taken without her concurrence and possibly her inspiration. Anne had no very profound convictions as to the selling of places, for she had as Princess previously deferred several appointments until Lady Churchill could have the disposing of them. Now,

however, it was announced that the selling of places at Court was from this time onwards prohibited. One result of this was of course that those with patronage at their disposal, although they had now less money, had more power. Sarah Churchill had now money and to spare, and we feel we have the real key to her attitude on this question when she says, "I could never think of selling my own favour, any more than that of my royal mistress". Even Sarah Jennings' favour had not been for sale.

But there are pleasures even greater than those which can be bought with money, and Lady Marlborough in the first few months of this reign began to understand as never before what it was to reward her friends and be even with her enemies. So places great and small were distributed to those who had previously served either the Princess or Lady Marlborough or were recommended by their friends. Lady Marlborough's theory on the subject of the disposal of places could scarcely be bettered. In a letter to Lord Godolphin of this year's date she says, "If I had any power to dispose of places, the first rule should be to have those that are proper to the business; the next those that had deserved upon any occasion; and whenever there was room without hurting the public I think one would with pleasure give employments to those that were in so unhappy a condition as to want them". One of her family was already in the service of the Queen, for a year previously it had come to her knowledge that an uncle of hers, a city merchant named Hill, had, through the twin misfortunes of injudicious speculation and a too numerous family, come to want and was living in poverty at Southampton. One of his daughters was actually working as chamber-maid to Lady Rivers in Kent. Energetic and practical as ever, Sarah swooped down on the family and took charge of the situation. Her command of influence at that time was but modest, but it sufficed. The eldest boy was placed by Godolphin in the Customs. The second, Sarah first equipped and sent to school at St. Albans, and finally placed in the household of the little Duke of Gloucester, where a place and a pension were also found for one of his sisters.

The other sister, Abigail, was with Lady Rivers. Sarah might

have left her there, but the post was a menial one and the girl was, after all, her cousin. So she took her away and brought her to St. Albans where she was installed as companion to the young girls there until a chance came to settle her in the household of the Princess herself as a woman of the bed-chamber. Abigail Hill seemed a colourless young woman and was very unattractive. Perhaps it was her misfortunes that had made her so silent and depressed-looking; her eyes



WINDSOR LODGE
From an engraving in the British Museum

were always downcast and she was too reserved and dissident to be altogether to Sarah's taste. However, she and her family were settled now and there was an end of the matter. Lady Marlborough had other and greater affairs to occupy her mind. She had another house now—at Windsor. Anne had given her the Rangership of Windsor Park, which carried with it Windsor Lodge, described by John Macky as "a delightful habitation". Sarah had long wanted such a country house and her possession of it came with an added pleasure as it had been taken from the Earl of Portland, who had always

been at special enmity with her husband. Anne was ~~only~~ too glad to be able to give Mrs. Freeman something that she had specially admired in the old days when they used to ride together in Windsor Park. "Anything," she wrote, "that is of so much satisfaction as this poor place seems to be to you I would give Mrs. Freeman all her days, which I pray God may be as many and as truly happy as this world can make you". (Benevolence was in Anne always a stronger point than grammar.)

But these details were after all only private and domestic. Anne had to decide other and weightier matters than questions of ladies-in-waiting, coffee bearers and sempstresses. Command abroad had been given to Marlborough. Who was to command at home? The modern system of party government by which the unfortunate electors have to adopt this or that system and personnel *en bloc* was as yet not in being. The sovereign had personal power (only controlled by the supplies of money in the Commons) to appoint ministers at her pleasure and it was open to her to appoint, if she chose, members selected from both the political parties which at that time represented the two opposing schools of thought in the country. These had crystallised after the Revolution into Whig and Tory. Although a detailed discussion of political nuances would be out of place in a purely personal biography, it is necessary here roughly to indicate the broad lines of difference between these two parties, since Sarah of Marlborough was so determinedly to throw in her lot with one of them, and with such far-reaching results.

The Whig party had had the largest share in the Revolution. Their sympathies were democratic rather than royal, and having assisted in expelling James, they desired to limit in future the prerogative of the Sovereign. Most of the trading and monied classes were to be found in their ranks, and these included the large majority of the Dissenters. It followed naturally that they stood firm for religious toleration of Dissent, though not, being democratic and revolutionary, of Catholics. They wanted above all a Protestant succession, security against despotism and the encouragement of trade.

On the other side were the Tories whose position was less

clearly defined and was, in some degree, anomalous. They had acquiesced in the Revolution because they stood for the Church of England, its power and prestige, and were prepared to tolerate Catholicism even less than Dissent. They consisted very largely of the old landed aristocracy and the small landed gentry and country squires, with their hatred of innovation, their insularity and their intense personal loyalty to the Sovereign, in whose divine right many of them still believed. William, of course, had never commanded their affection. He was neither Stuart nor High Church. They only tolerated him because neither James, nor after him his son, would renounce the Catholicism which debarred them from the throne. But Anne was different. Anne was a Stuart—of the legitimate royal blood. Anne was High Church. In her person they could make some show of reconciling their conflicting loyalties to the Revolution and to the Stuart blood, and in her they knew they had a warm supporter of the Church of England, the High Church even, whereas James had favoured the Catholics and William and Mary the Dissenters. They had supported Anne in the matter of the revenue, less, Lady Marlborough shrewdly remarks, from deference to her than from dislike of William, and we also have the same lady's word for it that they had paid assiduous court to Anne during the winter before William's death.

Only Louis XIV's action in acknowledging the Prince of Wales at St. Germains and garrisoning the Spanish Netherlands with French troops would have united them with the Whigs in the decision to declare war on France. On this matter alone the two parties were agreed, for only the most intractable and extreme amongst the Tories actually contemplated the restoration of James or his son.

It is therefore scarcely surprising that, when Anne came to the throne, she should be inclined to place the government in the hands of the Tories, and this she proceeded to do.

Marlborough, on account of his feud with William and his known relationship with St. Germains, was regarded as a Tory. Godolphin, though he had avoided any open breach with William, was known to have corresponded with James and to have supported the Princess, though not with any

violence, and was held to belong to the same camp. Their colleagues in office were men of perhaps less moderate opinion—"high-flyers" they were afterwards to be called. Lord Rochester the Queen wished to continue in his honourable banishment as Viceroy of Ireland.¹ She had not forgotten his support of Mary in the quarrel between the sisters. The Earl of Normanby, formerly the Lord Mulgrave of her girlhood's romance, now found himself in the councils of his royal friend and mistress as Lord Privy Seal and Duke of Buckingham. The Secretary of State was that bringer of unpleasant messages, the Earl of Nottingham, half derisively known by the nickname of Don Dismalo because—phenomenon so often to be observed—his political convictions and personal conscience seemed to have a depressing effect upon him. Other and minor posts were similarly occupied by Tories, and three distinguished Whig noblemen, Lords Somers, Halifax and Orford, were dismissed from the Privy Council.

Sarah Churchill watched these appointments being made with some surprise and more concern. But having all her life been accustomed to Anne's obedience, it was, she thought, only a matter of time before she could redress the balance in favour of the party to which by conviction and temperament she felt herself to belong. For the two cardinal principles of the Tories were both alien to her. She was much too clear-sighted and independent to be able to subscribe to their High Church tenets which she perceived to be less a spiritual doctrine with many of them than an expedient for temporal power. "The word Church," she says, "had never any charm for me in the mouths of those who made most noise with it; for I could not perceive that they gave any other distinguishing proof of their regard for the thing than a frequent use of the word, like a spell to enchant weak minds; and a persecuting zeal against dissenters and against those real friends of the Church who would not admit that persecution was agreeable to its doctrine." Anne had before this had to defend Mrs. Freeman against the charge of tolerance. In 1688 she had written to Mary, "Sorry people have taken such pains to give so ill a character of Lady Churchill. I believe there is nobody

¹ Rochester, however, preferred to govern Ireland from St. James'.

in the world has better *notions* of religion than she has. It is true she is not so strict as some are, nor does she keep such a bustle with religion; which I confess I think is never the worse, for one sees so many saints mere devils . . . and she has a true sense of the doctrine of our Church and abhors all principles of the Church of Rome". No. It did not seem likely that Lady Marlborough, the friend of the free-thinking, tolerant, outspoken Bishop Burnet (whom Anne disliked), would throw in her lot with the High Church party. Neither was she likely to favour the doctrine of divine right and regal autocracy—she who had ever been on the side of liberty and who was certainly no respecter of persons, be they royal or commoner. Besides, as she truly observed, Anne's title to the throne did not rest on any such foundation.

But the appointments were made, and Lady Marlborough for the first time found her wishes and advice set aside. It was only a tiny rift, and she still felt fairly confident in her power to sway the Queen in what direction she chose, even if in this affair of Whigs and Tories she could not fully count, as before, on the support of her husband and Lord Godolphin. Her campaign had to be begun single-handed. Anne was puzzled and a little distressed. It seemed so unthinkable that Mrs. Freeman should be opposing the appointments of those gentlemen who had been so kind to her, whose ideas about the royal prerogative were so comforting and who believed in the supremacy of the one section of the Church of which Anne approved. Dear Mrs. Freeman had, to be sure, quite often approved of people whom Anne detested—Bishop Burnet for instance, and that dreadful republican Lord Spencer, who had married Anne's god-daughter and had been heard to say that he wished there was never a peer in England. Mrs. Freeman had written to her too, saying the strangest things in praise of the Whigs and actually proposing that she, Anne, should look more favourably on them. So she wrote to Mrs. Freeman—who did not seem to be able to spend quite as much time with her as she used to, being so busy with these tiresome politics and fitting up Windsor Lodge to her liking. It was nothing, though—Mrs. Morley and Mrs. Freeman would soon understand each other again as perfectly as ever.

Anne had just opened Parliament, and she sent her speech to Sarah with anxious hopes for its approval. "I am very glad to find," she writes on October 24th, "by my dear Mrs. Freeman's that I was blest with yesterday that she liked my speech, but I cannot help being extremely concerned you are so partial to the Whigs because I would not have you and your poor unfortunate faithful Morley differ in opinion in the least thing. . . . I know the principles of the Church of England and I know those of the Whigs and it is that and no other reason which makes me think as I do of the last. And upon my word, my dear Mrs. Freeman, you are mightily mistaken in your notion of a true whig; for the character you give them does not in the least belong to them but to the church." As Mrs. Freeman has stayed so long at Windsor, it would now be better if she stayed until after the Lord Mayor's show, and Anne was "most passionately hers". But—had Anne ever before informed Sarah that she was "mightily mistaken" about anything?

If Mrs. Freeman had given her a little twinge of disappointment that summer, Anne in October had nothing but affection and gratitude towards Mr. Freeman. Marlborough had left England the preceding May. Sarah had gone as far as she could with him—to Margate, where she could see the ship that was bearing him away. They were still lovers, these two, and Marlborough, at last with the chance to prove the genius that was his and on the eve of fulfilling his high destiny, had but one thought as the cliffs of Margate slowly faded. "It is impossible to express," he wrote on board, "with what a heavy heart I parted from you when I was by the water's side. I could have given my life to come back, though I knew my own weakness so much that I durst not for I knew I should have exposed myself to the company. I did for a great while with a perspective glass look upon the cliffs in hopes I might have had one sight of you. We are now out of sight of Margate, and I have neither soul nor spirits, but I do this minute suffer so much that nothing but being with you will recompense it." There was at first little to compensate him in Holland. He had to face the infuriating timidity of the ignorant and selfish Dutch deputies from whom he had to

in the world has better *notions* of religion than she has. It is true she is not so strict as some are, nor does she keep such a bustle with religion; which I confess I think is never the worse, for one sees so many saints mere devils . . . and she has a true sense of the doctrine of our Church and abhors all principles of the Church of Rome". No. It did not seem likely that Lady Marlborough, the friend of the free-thinking, tolerant, outspoken Bishop Burnet (whom Anne disliked), would throw in her lot with the High Church party. Neither was she likely to favour the doctrine of divine right and regal autocracy—she who had ever been on the side of liberty and who was certainly no respecter of persons, be they royal or commoner. Besides, as she truly observed, Anne's title to the throne did not rest on any such foundation.

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the honour. They did not want a higher title—at all events until their income would allow them to maintain it. The Queen would be expected to reward every successful general with a dukedom, which would make things very difficult for her. Let them remain as they were. Marlborough, willing as ever to do what she wished, nevertheless felt, and got Godolphin to point out to her, that the higher rank would be of assistance to him in dealing with his intractable allies. Once she understood that, Sarah gave way, and the Duke and Duchess of Marlborough assumed their title on December 14th, 1702. Anne further tried to induce Parliament to settle £5,000 a year on the Duke out of the Post-Office revenues—a proceeding so perilously like the practices of Charles II and William with their favourites that Marlborough had personally to persuade her to withdraw it—so great an opposition did it encounter. Disappointed in this, the Queen offered the Duke and Duchess £2,000 a year out of the Privy Purse towards the maintenance of their new honours. But they would accept no more. She was forced to be content with what she had already done.

An opportunity was soon to arise for them to show their gratitude. Again it was a question of revenue—this time George's. Anne wanted George to have a separate income and to be fixed for ever in his various state appointments. (George was, incidentally, Generalissimo of Her Majesty's Forces by Land and Sea, but the onerous duties of the position, luckily for England, were carried out at St. James' in the intervals of his potations.) Greatly to everyone's surprise, the House of Lords, while they had no objection to giving George the very large income proposed, had the very strongest objections to allowing him to hold any offices in England should the House of Hanover succeed and he cease to be Prince Consort. They had had enough, in William's time, of foreigners holding offices of state. Amongst the most violent in opposition were Lord Somers and Lord Spencer, now Lord Sunderland, the latter of whom permitted himself to make use of several extremely tactless expressions about foreigners, which did nothing to alter the Queen's dislike of him. The Bill, however, passed by one vote chiefly owing to the influence

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and exertions of the Duke and Duchess of Marlborough. Anne wrote one of the affectionate letters in which the difficulties of the third person as usual overcame her—as they also frequently did Mrs. Freeman. “Neither words nor actions,” she said, “can ever express the true sense Mr. Morley and I have of your sincere kindness on this and on all other occasions; and therefore I will not say more on this subject but that to my last moment your dear unfortunate faithful Morley will be most passionately and tenderly yours.” The little rift was all forgotten, and once more Sarah was battling at her side as she used.

But the very next political measure that Anne supported she was disappointed to find that Mrs. Freeman disliked. The Tory government considered that this was an excellent moment to turn as many as possible of the Whigs out of the public offices remaining to them. The old battle cry of the Church in danger served them again. They had found, they said, on examination that their consciences were so unexpectedly tender that it was not possible for them, without grave moral discomfort, to allow the practice of occasional conformity—a system by which Dissenters technically qualified themselves for public offices by occasionally taking the Sacrament according to the Church of England. A Bill was therefore brought in to abolish it, and Anne, who, unlike most of her Tory ministers, really did love the Church and actually believed that the Dissenters endangered it, supported the measure eagerly, even commanding George, who as a Lutheran, was himself an occasional conformist, to go to the House of Lords, and vote for it. Marlborough himself voted for it, more, one may guess, from affection to the Queen than from any very profound convictions. But though it passed the Commons it was thrown out in the Lords, and Nottingham might have spared his wrath against a pestilential fellow who had written an ironical pamphlet advocating still further persecution of the Dissenters which he and others had taken seriously. His lordship objected to being made publicly ridiculous, and the future author of *Robinson Crusoe*, himself a Dissenter, was condemned for this *jeu d'esprit*¹ to Newgate

¹ *The Shortest Way with the Dissenters.* 1702.

and the pillory. Sarah's views on the Bill are given with ironical vigour in her "Conduct". She had no sympathy with "High Church nonsense of promoting religion by persecution", and sarcastically points out that it was not so much a question of restoring the Church to its due rights as of restoring "Tories and High Churchmen to their divine rights and privileges of possessing all the civil offices in the State and being the only men elected to serve in Parliament".

Once again Mrs. Freeman had differed from Mrs. Morley. It seemed as if prosperity were not the soil in which affection flourished. Anne persecuted, Anne sorrowful, Anne frightened, had held Sarah Churchill's love and Mrs. Morley and Mrs. Freeman could still be happy together in the card-room or at the tea-table, talking court gossip or scandal, sharing their fears for Marlborough fighting in Flanders and, as ever, careless of his personal safety. Sarah's children too had claims on the affection of Anne who had held them as babies in her arms and watched them play with the little boy who lay now in an Abbey vault. If only he had lived, to be like Sarah's son, who was so handsome, so charming, so devoted, uniting his mother's abilities and his father's sweetness! He was now at Cambridge and a distinguished classic, though he had wanted to go and fight with his father as soon as he left Eton. But Sarah who idolised him, said "no". She must go in fear for her beloved husband. She could not go in fear also for him who was only little less dear to her, and there was no other son to carry on the name his father was blazoning across Europe. So he was sent to Cambridge, where in the intervals of his studies he planned to serve in the cavalry with his friend Horace Walpole. At Cambridge too, he was in touch with the family friend Lord Godolphin, who was accustomed to spend what time he could snatch from the Treasury amongst the horses and cocks at Newmarket. Godolphin was fond of the lad and proud of him. "Your pretty son," he wrote to his mother, "is not only the best natured and most agreeable, but the most free-thinking and reasonable creature one can imagine for his age." Then there came a word of fear. There was small-pox at Cambridge. Godolphin wrote re-assuringly to Sarah who

was terribly anxious. The boy should come at once and stay at Newmarket. "Going into no house but mine," he said, "he will I hope be defended from it." But the infection had seized him already, and a few days later the dreadful news came. Frantic with fear, Sarah rushed to Cambridge as fast as the swiftest horses could take her. Anne did everything she could. Loving letters came to Sarah, and two royal physicians were sent post-haste from Windsor in the Queen's own carriage with every remedy that Anne's love and their knowledge could suggest. Their skill and the devoted nursing of his mother prolonged the struggle for a few days. Marlborough was racked with suspense and misery, but even then thinking of his wife. "I pray God," he said, "to give you some comfort in this great affliction. I beg I may hear as soon as possible for I have no thought but what is at Cambridge." Again that night—"If this uneasiness which I now be under should last long I think I could not live. For God's sake if there be any hope of recovery let me know it." But royal physicians had not been able to save even the Queen of England from this terrible disease. Marlborough was only just in time to see the end, and on February 20th, 1703, the Marquis of Blandford, only son of the Duke and Duchess of Marlborough, died in his seventeenth year.

His father and mother, broken-hearted, returned to St. Albans, and even her husband could scarcely touch Sarah in her overwhelming grief. Her paroxysms of weeping were so violent and so prolonged that many feared for her reason. She could not even have the comfort of Marlborough's presence for long, for the army was waiting for him and he needs must go. After his going she shut herself up at St. Albans, refusing to see anyone. Anne wanted to come to her but she would not allow it. Even the best loved of her daughters, the Lady Anne Sunderland, whose feeling for the "dearest father and mother that ever was" was "inexpressible", wrote to her father, "If you think I should not be a trouble to mamma, I should be glad to go to her".

When she finally did come to London, it was to spend hours alone in the cloisters of Westminster Abbey brooding over her grief and, as soon as she could, she returned to seclusion at

St. Albans. One beloved life had been taken and the other had gone into danger. Answering one of the many letters of condolence she writes (March 17th), "There is but one stroke of fortune that can be more severe and after naming it I can say no more."

Her health suffered, and Godolphin wrote anxiously to Marlborough about her altered appearance. He answered imploring her to take care of herself if only for his sake, who loved her so deeply. For a few weeks there had been a blessed hope that her ill-health might mean another child—perhaps a son. But the hope proved groundless and Marlborough's concern increased. "If you think my being with you can do any good," he wrote, "you shall quickly see you are much dearer to me than fame or whatever the world may say; for, should you do otherwise than well I were the unhappiest of men living." The first violence of grief, however, spent itself and time did its merciful work with Sarah Churchill. But one of the few streams of romance and unselfishness in her had been dried up, and she threw herself with perhaps redoubled vigour into the great game of politics which had already proved so absorbing and which gave, as nothing else had yet done, not only forgetfulness but some outlet to her restless brain and unquenchable vitality.

CHAPTER X

THE Occasional Conformity Bill was thrown out in the Lords—Lord Somers and Lord Wharton both distinguished themselves by their eloquence against it—and for the moment the high-flying Tories were beaten. They decided that their position needed strengthening. With this object four new Tory peers were to be created, whose votes in the Upper House might just give them the preponderance they lacked.

The news roused the Duchess from her lethargy of grief, and she determined to do what she could for her own party in this affair, and create at least one Whig peer. This was to be Mr. Hervey. At first, the four Tories absolutely refused their peerages if a Whig was to be added to their number, and the Duchess had finally to issue an ultimatum to Godolphin and her husband that, unless they supported her, she "neither could nor would show her face any more," having promised that it should be done. The threat succeeded and, we may believe, against the wishes of the Queen, the Treasurer, the Commander-in-Chief and practically the whole Government she had her way, and Mr. Hervey, father of that curious, brilliant, half-evil, half-tragic figure of later years, who was the inspiration of Pope's most terrible verses¹ now took the title of Lord Hervey, by which we know his son.

Encouraged by this, the Duchess now turned her attention to the Queen herself. She had perceived, earlier either than Marlborough or Godolphin, that without the support of the Whigs at home who represented in the main the finance of the country, the war could not be adequately carried on. Nothing was more likely to alienate them than the Occasional Conformity Bill, aimed as it was against the Dissenters who formed a considerable proportion of their ranks. The way

¹ The character of Sporus was based on Lord Hervey.

was clearer now for intervention, for Rochester, most extreme of High Church Tories, had resigned. He had been disconcerted by the loss of the Bill, jealous of the Queen's confidence in Godolphin (he thought he should himself have been at the Treasury), and piqued at his daughter being refused a post in the Bedchamber owing to the opposition of the Duchess of Marlborough. Finally, he had resented the not unreasonable request of the Queen that he should, in his capacity as Viceroy of Ireland, occasionally visit Dublin —this last request also being made at the instigation of the Marlboroughs. With Rochester out of the way, Sarah devoted herself to the task of altering the Queen's opinions about occasional conformity. Of this process there is no actual record¹, but we must infer it for there was no one else either able or willing to undertake it, and in her next speech to Parliament Anne, whatever her private views might still have been, actually tried to dissuade the two Houses from the measure, as impairing that unity at home so necessary for the prosecution of the war. Many and long must have been the talks at Kensington and Windsor. All Sarah's persuasions, all her arguments, all her old powers over Mrs. Morley must have been needed. Perhaps Anne gave way out of sheer weariness—who knows? Or perhaps, since she was kindly by nature, she was brought to see that this measure bore hardly on many of her subjects who had nothing but loyalty and affection for her. But even the Queen was powerless against the narrowness and bigotry of the Tory House of Commons who passed the Bill by a large majority. It met its former fate in the Lords by a majority of twelve, the opposition this time being led by another of the Duchess's friends, the Whig Bishop Burnet of Salisbury. Religious questions had by now assumed an importance second to nothing else in the Tory ranks. The supremacy of the High Church party had become for them the touchstone of their own power, and Marlborough found that his work abroad was being obstructed by those Tory members of the Government, chiefly Lord Nottingham and Sir Edward Seymour, whose zeal for the conquering of France had actually cooled

¹ The letters at Blenheim may possibly contain it.

so far as to make them advise a defensive campaign only, in the Netherlands. This was frankly intolerable. Sarah rushed to the rescue with characteristic impetuousness. Now at last they saw, she said to Marlborough and Godolphin, where their Tory friends would lead them—could they not turn a little to the Whigs, for whose support she herself would answer? She did not even hesitate to speak to the Queen of resignation; for in her political differences with Mrs. Morley, Mrs. Freeman now permitted herself to make use of a threat. Anne was frightened. Mrs. Freeman, it was true, had been very difficult of late, and really had seemed to care very little about what Anne considered the Church's need for security. But the habit of years was still strong upon her, and the prospect of actually doing without her life-long friend could not easily be faced. As for Mr. Freeman—Anne did not understand very much of military matters, but she did understand that the domination of Louis XIV would threaten both her religion and her throne, and she was quite clear that Mr. Freeman must at all costs continue to lead her armies. With regard to Mr. Montgomery (for so Lord Godolphin had been named in the intimacy of earlier correspondence), Mr. Freeman had always declared that he would not serve without him, and Anne herself found his steady tactfulness and temperance very soothing, more indeed to her taste than Rochester's intractableness and hectoring or Nottingham's intolerance and gloom. She would appeal to Mrs. Freeman by letter. They had always been accustomed to write long letters to each other.

"The thoughts that both my dear Mrs. Freeman and Mr. Freeman have of retiring," she wrote, "give me no small uneasiness and therefore I must say something on that subject. It is no wonder at all that people in your posts should be weary of the world, who are so continually troubled with all the hurry and impertinences of it; but give me leave to say you should a little consider your faithful friends and poor country which must be ruined if ever you put your melancholy thoughts into execution. As for your poor unfortunate faithful Morley, she could not bear it; for if ever you forsake me I would have nothing to do with the world, but make another abdication; for what is a crown when the support of it is

gone? I never will forsake your dear self, Mr. Freeman or Mr. Montgomery, but always be your constant and faithful friend, and we four must never part till Death mows us down with his impartial hand."

There is not, certainly, the same note of passion in this letter that there had been in those which the Princess of Denmark had written to Lady Marlborough from Sion House. But Anne's affection was still deep and sincere and would flame again into love if only Sarah would let it¹. "I beg," she wrote pathetically to Sarah, "she would never let difference of opinion hinder us from living together as we used to do. Nothing shall ever alter your poor unfortunate faithful Morley, who will live and die with all truth and tenderness, yours." Sarah, indeed, found the letter was very well, and she sent it on to the Duke, pressing him to take advantage of the situation to get rid of the most violent of the Tories who had shown themselves to be his enemies. Actions, she thought, spoke louder than words. But Marlborough still clung to the forlorn hope of a Tory, or at the worst, of a coalition government. He did not wish to ally himself with either party. "I think both parties unreasonable and unjust," he wrote. He managed his wife as he managed everybody else, —with tactfulness and with patience, for though he disagreed profoundly with her opinions about the Whigs and the advisability of bringing them into power *en bloc*, he managed, by counselling moderation and meeting her as far as he could to keep the peace. "I hope in God this will agree with what you desire," he ends one of his letters, "and then I can have no uneasiness." But the Duchess felt she could not rest until the obstructionists had been displaced, and determined to bide her time. Marlborough returned to England in the autumn of 1703, and preparations had to be made for entertaining the young Archduke Charles whom the allied armies were trying to place upon the throne of Spain. The Duchess was the leading hostess upon this occasion, and, accompanied by the Queen, his highness was twice entertained at Windsor

¹ It is hard to see how, with this and other evidence before them, Miss Strickland and some of the Duchess' biographers find it possible to state that Anne's affection scarcely survived her coronation.

Lodge. Afterwards, at a state banquet, he presented the Duchess with a magnificent diamond ring. The rest of the two days' visit was spent in "basset, musick and country dances".¹ It was not all political caballing even at St. James'. The Duchess's accounts of the Privy Purse money show various sums disbursed to musicians performing before the Queen, and the month of her birthday in this year saw at least two command performances of plays at St. James', where on the 8th of February Dryden's splendid *All for Love* was performed, and on the 14th George was complimented by the presentation of the princely student and dreamer, Hamlet, also of Denmark.

Marlborough had had to pay a short visit to Holland in January to restore Dutch confidence, shaken by the Tory attitude in England, to try and induce Holland to furnish her quota of men, and to make what plans he could for the coming campaign. When he returned he found Nottingham and his friends opposing the recruiting Bill. Even Marlborough's patience gave way, and the Duchess scored another notable political triumph when Nottingham was finally dismissed and with him several of his friends, and their places taken by more moderate Tories and in one instance, that of the Earl of Kent who displaced Lord Jersey, by a moderate Whig. Marlborough himself selected the man to fill the important office of Northern² Secretary of State. Robert Harley, Speaker of the House of Commons, was known to be a man of moderate views, coming himself from a dissenting stock, and yet maintaining friendships with members of the Church party, and with a still further pursuance of two ideals was in the habit of holding family prayers in his own house, except when he was too drunk to do so. A strange, secret man, Harley. It was difficult to tell exactly what he was feeling, so cold and impassive he seemed, so enigmatic. But his gifts were undeniable and had been shown in William's reign chiefly in financial affairs. He was in his leisure moments a scholar and a bibliophile and loved to retreat to his home in Herefordshire, turning over the rare manuscripts brought

¹ Letter of Lady Rachel Russell. Downshire MSS. H.M.C.

² There were then two, Northern and Southern.

to him by agents all over Europe, and by which the Bodleian Library to-day is so much the richer. He had always been on friendly terms with Marlborough, for whom he had a great admiration. He had been less successful with Lady Marlborough, who could never bring herself to trust him. It was difficult for her now to establish contact with anyone for whom dissimulation and self-containedness were instinctive weapons, and Harley had none of the personal graces which might have attracted her. She opposed his appointment, and warned her husband not to trust him too implicitly, an attitude she also adopted to the appointment of Harley's friend and disciple Henry St. John to the important post of Secretary of War. St. John had enough graces to attract anyone. Although only twenty-five, his brilliant mind, personal beauty and persuasive charm, allied with the fire and energy of youth, made him a figure which seemed destined for the most dazzling future. It was inevitable that he also should admire Marlborough and wish to serve under him and that Marlborough should have the kindest feelings towards this amazingly gifted and attractive young man. But once again the Duchess spoke a word of warning. St. John she trusted perhaps even less than Harley. She divined in him a restless and boundless ambition, which, she felt, might, if occasion arose, overwhelm all feelings of gratitude and loyalty to others. He professed, moreover, the High Church principles she detested and which in his case as she perceived were peculiarly ill-placed, for the profligacy of his private life presented an odd and unpleasing commentary on the sincerity of his professions of devotion to the Church.

The appointments were nevertheless made, much against the wishes and advice of the Duchess, and when Marlborough left England in April 1704, it was with a cloud of political disagreement hanging between him and his beloved wife, for Sarah had evidently allowed her anger and disappointment over recent events to lead to a quarrel. She went, as was her custom, to see him off, but remained intractable and even hostile to the last. But when he had actually gone she came to her senses, and realising that she had sent the man she loved so much and who loved her so deeply to his great and arduous

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work and into danger without a word of tenderness at farewell, sat down and poured out the revulsion of her feelings on paper. The letter, according to her express instructions, was finally burnt, but we can infer its tone from Marlborough's passionate answer.

"Hague, April 24—May 5.

"Your dear letter of the 15th came to me but this minute.

My lord treasurer's letter in which it was inclosed, by some mistake was sent to Amsterdam. I would not for any thing in my power it had been lost; for it is so very kind, that I would in return lose a thousand lives if I had them to make you happy. If you will give me leave it will be a great pleasure to me to have it in my power to read this dear dear letter often, and that it may be found in my strong box when I am dead. I do this minute love you better than ever I did before.

This letter of yours has made me so happy, that I do from my soul wish we could retire and not be blamed. What you propose as to coming over I should be extremely pleased with: for your letter has so transported me, that I think you would be happier in being here than where you are: although I should not be able to see you often. But you will see by my last letter, as well as this, that what you desire is impossible: for I am going up into Germany, where it would be impossible for you to follow me: but love me as you now do, and no hurt can come to me. You have by this kindness preserved my quiet, and I believe my life: for till I had this letter, I have been very indifferent of what should become of myself. I have pressed this business of carrying an army into Germany, in order to leave a good name behind me, wishing for nothing else but good success. I shall now add, that of having a long life, that I may be happy with you."

So the excitements of political scheming and the sweets of power went for nothing compared with her love, and were to be thrown aside that she might be with him and atone for her cold looks and violent and hasty words. Truly a royal atonement and not merely the violent impulse of the moment, for

in a letter of six weeks later we find the Duke once more writing that what she proposed was, alas, impossible. How completely impossible it was only Marlborough knew, for the plans now maturing in his mind were his own secret, not to be revealed even to Sarah. Astonishment changed to suspicion in England, as Marlborough led his armies from the Moselle, where they had expected the campaign, to the Neckar, and suspicion to anger and something very like panic when it became clear that, wearied beyond endurance by the shackling timidity and obstructionism of the Dutch deputies, he had left them behind and was taking the allied armies—whither? Tallard and Villeroy, the French marshals operating against them, would have given their dearest possessions to know, but they were entirely at sea. To the Duchess he wrote “I see out of my chamber window the Rhine and the Neckar and his¹ two principal towns of Mannheim and Heidelberg; but would be much better pleased with the prospect of St. Albans which is not very famous for seeing far”. Marlborough trusted but few even with the proposed direction of the march and they were true to his trust. Communication with England was slow and uncertain now that he was two hundred miles from his old scenes of operations, and the Tories, who had but recently tried to impose upon him a defensive plan of campaign in the Netherlands, were aghast and furious, the most extreme among them talking of impeachment on his return. Sarah kept him posted as to the feeling at home. “I find,” he writes to her, “that there are several people who would be glad of my not having success in this undertaking. I am very confident, without flattering myself, that it is the only thing that was capable of saving us from ruin. . . .” Sarah could only write and wait and pray for his safety and success. Her almost daily letters often took a month to reach him and the weeks of June dragged on without any decisive news. Then there came a dispatch to Mr. Secretary Harley and suspense was changed to joy. “His Grace the Captain-General humbly presumed to inform her majesty that the success of his first attack of the enemy had been equal to the justice of the cause her majesty had so graciously and zealously espoused . . .”

¹ The Elector Palatine.

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work and into danger without a word of tenderness at farewell, sat down and poured out the revulsion of her feelings on paper. The letter, according to her express instructions, was finally burnt, but we can infer its tone from Marlborough's passionate answer.

“Hague, April 24—May 5.

“Your dear letter of the 15th came to me but this minute. My lord treasurer's letter in which it was inclosed, by some mistake was sent to Amsterdam. I would not for any thing in my power it had been lost; for it is so very kind, that I would in return lose a thousand lives if I had them to make you happy. If you will give me leave it will be a great pleasure to me to have it in my power to read this dear dear letter often, and that it may be found in my strong box when I am dead. I do this minute love you better than ever I did before.

This letter of yours has made me so happy, that I do from my soul wish we could retire and not be blamed. What you propose as to coming over I should be extremely pleased with: for your letter has so transported me, that I think you would be happier in being here than where you are: although I should not be able to see you often. But you will see by my last letter, as well as this, that what you desire is impossible: for I am going up into Germany, where it would be impossible for you to follow me: but love me as you now do, and no hurt can come to me. You have by this kindness preserved my quiet, and I believe my life: for till I had this letter, I have been very indifferent of what should become of myself. I have pressed this business of carrying an army into Germany, in order to leave a good name behind me, wishing for nothing else but good success. I shall now add, that of having a long life, that I may be happy with you.”

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¹ The Elector Palatine.

owing to the particular blessing of God and the unparalleled bravery of her troops." Where was this victory? Truly there had been reason for the apprehensions. All Europe stood amazed. Here was a new method of warfare. Right up the Danube had Marlborough taken his armies, and by a successful assault on the heights of the Schellenberg secured the position of Donauwörth from which to attack Bavaria.

These were the armies which should have remained in the Netherlands, where every well-conducted general had formerly been content to remain. To Sarah there came the letter she had been longing for from the victor who was so tired that he could scarcely hold the pen. "I think myself so happy in my dearest soul's love," she read, "that I know she will be better pleased with two lines that I am well after the action we had yesterday, than with whole volumes." All was joy and triumph; Marlborough was hailed as a second Tamerlane, and the malcontents at home had perforce to hold their peace. But before long they found new cause for criticism. The Duke was still imperilling all the allied armies in those remote plains of the Danube; Tallard was marching against him with fresh and unwearied troops. The Elector of Bavaria had collected reinforcements after his recent defeat. The situation was perilous indeed, and the old days of suspense and anxiety had come again, intensified this time by a more accurate knowledge of the possible dangers and extreme remoteness of Marlborough's position. The whole fate of Europe seemed to hang in the balance. Should the allied armies now be annihilated by the French marshal, little hope there would be of checking the domination of a Catholic France or wresting the crown of Spain from a Bourbon. The days dragged on and still there came no word from the Danube. July merged into August and England waited with a beating heart and anxious eyes. But on August 13th a gentleman flung himself on his horse and began a ride across Europe to the sea. To Frankfort he rode in two days, to Rotterdam¹ in two more, sparing neither his horse nor himself, for his tidings brooked no delay. At Rotterdam he needs must board a ship and never were winds so anxiously scanned. At last, after three

¹ I am indebted for these two details to Professor Trevelyan's *Blenheim*.

days more, the cliffs of England gleamed white and the ride began again, this time for London itself. He carried no formal dispatches, this swift horseman, no long official documents. His most precious possession was a little piece of paper, torn from a pocket book, scrawled with a few words in pencil, and addressed not to Queen or minister but to a woman waiting in London for news of her husband. And it was at the apartments of her Grace the Duchess of Marlborough at St. James' that Colonel Parke, aide-de-camp to his Grace the Captain-General, first made his halt on August 21st, eight days after the battle of Blenheim.

The Duchess sent the Colonel with a letter on to the Queen, who was at Windsor. The precious pencilled note she had copied and sent to the newspapers. The printing presses worked with joyful haste, and by the evening, a few hours after its delivery, the Duke's message—which, though sent expressly to his wife, had been thoughtfully framed for publication—was being bought in thousands as broadsheets by a populace delirious with joy.¹ The guns thundered their salute and the bonfires flamed and the bells clashed all that night, and as the glorious news spread far and wide, the flames leapt up from every hill in England, and cathedral tower and little country steeple alike shook their notes into the air. Nothing was talked of in shop and street and coffee-house but the Duke and the message written in pencil from the saddle, telling in such modest and simple words of his gift to the English people. This was what he said to the Duchess.

"August 13, 1704. I have not time to say more, but beg you will give my duty to the Queen, and let her know that her army has had a glorious victory. M. Tallard and two other generals are in my coach, and I am following the rest. The bearer, my aide-de-camp, Colonel Parke, will give her an account of what has passed. I shall do it in a day or two by another more at large—MARLBOROUGH."

Colonel Parke's narrative was printed² as soon as he could give it, and letters of congratulation poured in on the Duchess from all sides; Queen Anne had written:

¹ *The Satyr.*

² *The Postman.*

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"Since I sent my letter¹ away by the messenger I have had the happiness of receiving my dear Mrs. Freeman's, by Colonel Parke, with the good news of this glorious victory, which, next to God Almighty, is wholly owing to dear Mr. Freeman, on whose safety I congratulate you with all my soul. May the same Providence that has hitherto preserved, still watch over and send him well home to you. . . ." Nothing would voice the feeling of the nation but a public ceremony, and on September 7th her Majesty attended the yet unfinished cathedral of St. Paul's in a public thanksgiving. The procession was long and stately. Knights of the Garter were there, Grenadiers, Yeomen of the Guard, great nobles and their ladies, coaches and six, Gentlemen Ushers, Pages of Honour, horsemen and trumpets. Then came the Coach of State drawn by eight horses, attended by Horse Guards and containing four figures. George was there, resplendent, and the Queen blazing with jewels. Two ladies were in attendance and one of them drew all eyes by her proud carriage and the simplicity, almost austerity, of her dress. Sarah of Marlborough needed no jewels that day, as though the cheering shouting crowds, the Tower guns thundering in her ears, she drove through garlanded streets to give thanks for the triumph of England's greatest commander, her husband.²

Marlborough, although wearied out and suffering in health from the effects of his great efforts, had still much to do abroad to consolidate his victory, and found it impossible to get home in the autumn, when his political burdens awaited him at the opening of Parliament. Even the victory at Blenheim, which indeed they attempted to decry, had not completely silenced those extreme Tories who put political hostility to the Whigs and such moderate Tories as Marlborough, Godolphin and Harley, before everything else. Their efforts to discredit her husband still further inflamed the Duchess against them, and having got rid of Rochester, Nottingham and Seymour, she was unwearied in her efforts to induce Godolphin and Marlborough to dismiss at least the most violent of those that remained, chiefly the Duke of Buckingham, Lord Privy Seal, and Sir Nathan Wright, Lord Keeper.

¹ She had evidently just written to the Duchess.

² *London Gazette*, September 7th, 1704.



JOHN, DUKE OF MARLBOROUGH

From a mezzotint in the Sutherland Collection, Bodleian Library, Oxford
Painted by J CLOSTERMAN Engraved by I SIMON

Matters came to a head when, in December, they resorted once more to their familiar device of the Occasional Conformity Bill, doubtless because they considered that this was the measure most likely to have the support of the Queen and perhaps alienate from her those who openly opposed it. But the Bill had been twice thrown out by a predominantly Whig House of Lords. The high-flyers then hit on a measure remarkable for its unconstitutional chicanery. They proposed to tack the Bill on to a Money Bill and send it up thus to the Lords who, as it dealt with finance, would be unable to throw it out. The fact that it was totally unconnected with finance and that, if permitted, this expedient would destroy the whole power of the Upper Chamber and so alter the entire constitution, was, if present at all, but secondary in their minds to the possibility of a political triumph over the Whigs and the more moderate members of their own party. But the Commons refused the tack by a large majority and the Bill then went up alone to the Lords where it was again thrown out. This unprincipled and unconstitutional action on the part of the extreme Tories proved their ruin, for the more moderate members of the party seceded from them and the way was made clearer for what the Duchess had so much at heart, the entrance of some of the Whig party into the government. Not that Anne had yet any very kindly feelings towards the Whigs. The prejudices implanted in her mind against them during William's reign, her own High Church distrust of Dissenters, and the personal dislike she felt towards some of their leaders still caused her to regard the party with a disfavour that all the Duchess' arguments and importunities, spoken and written, seemed powerless to remove. Mrs. Morley's letters grew perforce more defensive, and even apologetic in tone, though still affectionate. She writes to Mrs. Freeman that while not at all doubting of her truth and sincerity, she "hopes her not agreeing in everything you say will not be imputed to want of value, esteem or tender kindness for my dear dear Mrs. Freeman." As regards the Whigs, Anne's opinions were unaltered. "In the late reign," she remarked, "everything was leaning towards the Whigs, and whenever that is, I shall think the Church beginning to be in danger."

unless the Tories had acted as they did, it is difficult to say and perhaps not relevant to ask At all events, Buckingham, Anne's friend and quondam lover, was turned out and was quickly followed into political exile by the holder of a still more important post—that of Lord Keeper Of Sir Nathan Wright, who held it, the most that can be said is that he was incorruptible and High Church For the rest, he was inefficient, and so slow that his delays almost amounted to a denial of justice,¹ and moreover he had allowed his political prejudices to sway judicial appointments, having between 1700 and 1704 dispossessed several hundreds of Whig Justices of the Peace and substituted Tories "His removal however, remarked the Duchess, "was a great loss to the Church for which he had ever been a warm stickler," and she added "This loss was the more sensibly felt, as his successor, my Lord Cowper, was not only of the Whig party but of such abilities and integrity as brought a new credit to it in the nation" The promotion of one of England's most distinguished Chancellors was in the main the doing of Sarah Churchill We should not perhaps feel at liberty to accept only her word for it, but the proof lies in his own statement In his private diary the entry of Thursday, Oct 18th runs "In the evening visited with Lord Halifax, the Duchess of Marlborough who declined all acknowledgment I offered of thanks for my advancement and waiving that talk, went on to other subjects, and in the whole expressed herself very averse from the High Church party"

Things were looking noticeably brighter for the Whigs and not only Marlborough but even the cautious Godolphin began, we are told by Burnet and the Duchess, to look more favourably on them What followed in the autumn is best given in the Duchess' own ironic and amusing style

"What was worse than all these² misfortunes," she wrote, "the majority of the House of Commons in the new Parliament³ of 1705 proved to be Whig

"No wonder if in those sad circumstances a loud and

¹ John Lord Campbell *Lives of the Chancellors*

² The dismissal of Buckingham and Wright

³ April

piteous cry was raised upon the extreme danger of the poor Church. A doleful piece¹ . . . was printed and spread abroad setting forth her melancholy condition and distress; and much lamentation it occasioned. But what remedy? . . . One expedient still remained and this was to invite the Princess Sophia of Hanover . . . to come over and defend the Church. Her presence here, though she would not probably, as a Lutheran, be very zealous for a Bill against occasional conformists, yet might happily prove a means to hinder the Whigs from bringing in Popery and the Pretender. A motion was therefore made in the House of Lords for this invitation and the necessity of it urged with great strength of argument by the Earls of Rochester and Nottingham and other² grave men of the party. Not that they had the least hope or the least desire to carry their point, but being well assured that the Queen would never consent to such an invitation, nor pardon her ministers if they encouraged the design, this was a notable stratagem to ruin them either with her Majesty or with the nation; for if in compliance with her prejudices they opposed this motion, it was to be hoped it would draw the public odium upon them as declared enemies to the Protestant succession."

The Tories knocked almost the last nail in their coffin with this brilliant idea. The actual dilemma of the Whigs was solved by Lord Somers, who not only arranged that Anne should be present at the debate and hear herself almost insulted by the Tories, but cleared his party from the suspicion of not supporting the Hanoverian succession arranged by William, by introducing a Regency Bill which provided for the tranquil and legal government of the country in the event of Anne's decease during any period which must elapse before her successor could arrive.

Anne, naturally enough, could not bear the idea either of the Electress Sophia or her son George residing in England, partly because a rival court would certainly create difficult situations and partly, we may believe, from a lingering tenderness towards her unknown and dispossessed brother. She

¹ *The Memorial of the Church of England, 1703.*
² Buckingham was one.

could, anyhow, scarcely be expected to enjoy a reminder of her own mortality constantly at her elbow. Her resentment against the Tories was kindled by this inconsiderate and tactless proposal. And when Mrs. Morley once felt resentment it was very difficult to efface it. The immediate effect of this event was, however, an improvement in the relationship of Mrs. Morley and Mrs. Freeman, which recently for the first time had become a little strained. Anne was unhappy about this, and, only too glad to find that at last she and Mrs. Freeman need no longer wrangle over this persistent question of Whig and Tory, writes to her thus: "I believe dear Mrs. Freeman and I shall not disagree as we have formerly done, for I am sensible of the services those people have done me that you have a good opinion of, and will countenance them, and am thoroughly convinced of the malice and insolence of them that you have always been speaking against".

So for the moment Mrs. Morley and Mrs. Freeman were able to forget that for the last three years there had arisen unaccountable and puzzling differences between them. The Duchess had now enough on her hands to satisfy even her insatiable energy and vitality. In addition to her household cares, there was all this new political intrigue and excitement, there was endless detail and business to be transacted in her capacities of Groom of the Stole and Keeper of the Privy Purse. Her correspondence alone must have been enormous, and as all the scattered fragments of manuscript that can be collected from this time are in her own handwriting, she does not seem to have employed a secretary. Endless applications for places, preferments, favours reached her every day. "It is impossible for you to imagine the hurry I am in when I am at St. James' and the Court in Town, and it would be ridiculous to describe it," she writes to a friend at St. Albans—though she continues her letter with explicit directions about a sempstress working her bed with point! It may be of some interest to show her conducting official correspondence and dealing with the difficult but, one guesses, constant business of refusing favours in the Queen's name. There are many such letters in the scattered manuscripts.¹ "I received the favour of your

¹ In the H.M.C. collections and holograph MSS. in the British Museum.

letter, madam, when I was in the country and tho' I had heard of many applications refused, of the same nature as yours which gave me very little hopes of succeeding in what you desire, I could not resist trying since I came to town; but her majesty was pleased to say that it would be a very ill president (*sic*) for her to goe back to arrears in King Charles's time besides that the crown is not in a condition to doe it.

"I am very sorry I can give you noe better an account of your commands, for it would have been a great pleasure to me if I could have been of any use to you, who am

"Madam,

"Your most obedient

"humble servant

"S. MARLBOROUGH."

January the 4. 1703.

To this we may perhaps add a letter¹ in which she asks rather than refuses a favour, and which gives us some hint that she was not without enemies and traducers. The "project" she writes of was carried out successfully.

"To the Earl of Montague. 1705. May 21st. St. Albans.

"I wish you would try to help me in another project. My lord Essex being my neighbour and having very little to do, he has done me the favour to come twice to St. Albans. I think he has as good a heart as one can wish in any person, and I believe that helps to make his circumstances uneasy, which would be something mended by being Governor of the Tower. I should think a man that is a soldier had a better title to an employment of that nature than my Lord Abingdon who will never make a campaign but for the Jacobite Elections. I have been a little vexed at some things I hear has been reported of me . . . for the spirit of lying runs away with more Tories than ever I had the honour to know."

There had been two more weddings. Lady Elizabeth had married the Earl of Bridgewater and Lady Mary the Earl of Montague, and to each of the brides Anne had given the portion she had bestowed at the two earlier weddings of Lady

¹ Buccleuch MSS. H.M.C.

Godolphin and Lady Sunderland. Grandchildren had now come to create an added interest, and since 1704 there had been the plans and foundations of the palace at Woodstock to think about, a task which, as Marlborough had of necessity to spend the building season of the summer abroad, fell mostly on the Duchess. The foundation stone was laid on June 18th, 1705, amid festivities at Woodstock. "There were several sorts of music; three morris dances, one of the young fellows, one of maidens, one of beldames. There were about 100 buckets, bowls and pans filled with wine, punch, cakes and ale. All then went to the Town Hall where the better sort regaled themselves on punch and claret while the common people emptied 8 barrels of beer and consumed abundance of cakes."¹ The work was to be pressed on, and we learn that a few days after the stone had been laid there were nearly a thousand workmen employed on the house alone, and more on the gardens. The designs accepted for the Palace were those of Captain John Vanbrugh, Comptroller of the Royal Works—an odd selection when we consider that Wren himself was living and had submitted plans. But Wren was not at that time in very high favour at the Court, and so, very regrettably, it was to the dashing, versatile, flamboyant Vanbrugh rather than to the elegant and serene Wren that the commission was given. Vanbrugh, so far, had been more distinguished as a dramatist than as an architect. His plays, *The Relapse*² and *The Provok'd Wife*,³ even now can be read with some pleasure and had both been successful. This was more than could be said for his activities as an architect. Combining both his capacities, he had built a theatre at the Haymarket.

It may have been unexceptionable architecturally, but it had one grave fault as a theatre—nobody could hear the actors. But he was evidently on terms of cordiality with the Churchills, for the foundation stone was laid by Lady Anne Sunderland who at that time was a reigning beauty, a toast at the Kit-cat, and known affectionately as "the little Whig"—an interesting comment on the politics, not only of her husband, but of her father and mother. In 1705 Vanbrugh was already at work for the Earl of Carlisle—a zealous Whig—on Castle Howard,

¹ *Upcott's Diary.*

² 1696.

³ 1697.

the ornate design of which was itself a clear indication of the lines on which the palace now to be erected at Woodstock would be conceived. A model of the proposed building was made and placed in the Gallery at Kensington Palace so that the Queen might consider it at her leisure and hear opinions of it. One of these was unfavourable—that of the Duchess of Marlborough. From the first her point of view differed from that of the designer. She thought the whole building planned on too vast a scale for comfort, convenience or utility, and, with what proved to be true foresight, declared that it would never be finished in time for the Duke to enjoy it. This last was perhaps a better objection even than any of the others, for it may be urged that the building was not after all only or primarily designed as a private house. It was a national monument, to be erected at the national cost and by the nation to a victorious general, in memory of a specific occasion, and therefore could not be considered to be on the same footing as a private residence erected for his own pleasure by any nobleman who chose to be at the expense.¹ Vanbrugh puts the point in a letter to Lord Poulet.² "The building was to be calculated and adapted to a private habitation yet it ought at the same time to be considered as both a Royal and a national monument and care taken in the design and execution that it might have the qualities proper to such a monument viz. Beauty, Magnificence and Duration."

So Vanbrugh sat down to design a magnificent monument, and wrote to his friend Mr. Tonson for a "Palladio" in French—so we know what to expect—and the Duchess wrote afterwards, "I never liked any building so much for the show and vanity, as for usefulness and convenience, and therefore I was always against the whole design of Blenheim as too big and unwieldy, whether I considered the pleasure of living in it or the good of my family that were to enjoy it hereafter." Here, then, were all the presages of a stormy passage.

For a time, however, all went well, and the end of 1705 saw Sarah Churchill at the highest point of her power. The

¹ I rely entirely on books and prints for what I write about Blenheim. The public are no longer admitted to view the palace.

² Letters. ed. G. Webb.

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political differences with the Queen were for the moment in abeyance, and Mrs. Morley, when vexing questions about the Church no longer obtruded themselves, quickly fell again under the spell of her adored Mrs. Freeman.

The Whigs were grateful to Sarah for her efforts on their behalf and for the entry into office of at least two of their number. Her son-in-law, Sunderland, who was no flatterer, writes thus to her in December 1705 from the Hague, "We have met with so much good news from England since our coming hither, that I can't help, dear Madam, congratulating you upon it, for I am sure nobody has contributed more towards it than you." With the Queen ruled by her, the political leaders paying humble court to her, her daughters married into the great houses of England, the Lord High Treasurer her most intimate friend and the conqueror of Blenheim and the greatest man in Europe her devoted husband, little wonder that the Duchess of Marlborough was accused by her enemies of insolence and arrogance and given in bitterness the title of "Queen Sarah". Her power over the Queen was the subject of many Tory lampoons. In 1704 they wrote:—Upon a great lady's visiting the Tomb of Duke Humphrey the Good, Duke of Gloucester, at St. Albans.

"Nor shall she¹ dare at my directing nod
To own her kindred, friends, her Church and God
And Anne shall wear the crown but Sarah reign. . . .
Churchill shall rise on easy Stuart's fall
And Blenheim's tower shall triumph o'er Whitehall."

There were many similar effusions.

Face to face with Sarah, some at least of the Tories were not so bold. One of them, Mr. James Johnston, hastened to Hampton Court where the Queen then (1704) resided—"but observing the Duchess of Marlborough to look upon him with anger, he retired to his country seat and fine gardens not far off where he entertained himself with country recreations and the refreshment of the pleasant river."² The poor man seems to have had a nervous breakdown!

Occasionally the Duchess' power took an even more serious turn than sending nervous gentlemen to seek rural solitude.

¹ Anne.

² A. Cunningham. *History of Great Britain*. 1787.

In November 1705 the House of Commons heard the petition of Henry Killigrew against the election of Mr. Gape to the seat at St. Albans. Bribery was proved against Gape, and his counsel alleged ill practices on behalf of Killigrew by the Duchess of Marlborough. The evidence, if read with a discerning eye, is amusing. Various worthy citizens were called for the defence and gave honest and ingenuous accounts of interviews at Holywell House with her Grace, who had sent for them thither for a little friendly political conversation. To Charles Turner she observed that "such men as Mr. Gape (though she had nothing against him personally) would unhinge the government, and that Mr. Turner must surely know that the Papists' horses stood saddled day and night for whipping and spurring." Mr. Turner's reply is not recorded. Of Mr. Miller she asked if he would be for such men as were against the Queen's interest and the good of the nation? With Mr. Henry Hopkins she took stronger measures. (Perhaps he found courage to argue.) To him she read over King Charles II's speech against tacking, and with Dr. John Coatsworth, evidently a knowledgeable man and a talker like herself, she "discoursed pro and con as to several points of state." She certainly gave twenty guineas to a Mr. Crosfield who had been arrested for debt, but on that occasion there was never any talk of politics. Various other worthy burgesses testified that the Duchess had sent for them; but from none of them was Gape's counsel able to elicit any admissions pointing to bribery.¹

The debate gave occasion for several Tory attacks on the Duchess. "Some," says Burnet, "reflected very indecently on her. Bromley compared her to Alice Piers in the time of King Edward III and said many other virulent things against her; for indeed she was looked on by the whole party as the person who had reconciled the Whigs to the Queen, from whom she was naturally very averse."²

The truth was that Sarah's naturally dominating and haughty temper had had, since 1702, little or nothing to check and everything to stimulate it. The intoxications of a power

¹ *House of Commons Journals*, Nov. 1705.

² *History of my own Times*.

perhaps greater than any, other than regal, ever wielded in England by a woman, had not unnaturally quickened in her a native imperiousness that by now was unwilling and unable to brook the slightest contradiction. With the approach of middle age—she was now forty-five—the power of self-control, never strong in her, became increasingly weakened and the delicate mental balance between control and violence even more precariously poised. Her latent intellectual gifts and capacity for political thinking had developed and ripened, taking her far ahead of Anne, whose mind had remained exactly as it had been and always would be. If Anne had sometimes bored Sarah in the early days, her capacity for boring her now had increased ten-fold. "I often spent hours in talking to her when I would rather have been in a dungeon," wrote Sarah, who, like all highly-strung, restless, intellectual and uncontrolled persons, hated boredom more than anything in the world. Many a discussion protracted beyond its bearable limits by Anne's slowness or obstinacy would now be ended abruptly by Sarah with a "Lord, madam, it must be so!" And though Anne as often as not gave way, her feelings when the page announced "Her Grace the Duchess of Marlborough" at her closet door cannot have always been those of the unmixed pleasure of five years before. Moreover Sarah had of late been bothering Anne to do something more than usually repugnant. She actually wanted her son-in-law Lord Sunderland in the government, and as no less than the other Secretary of State—a position at present held by a man whom, although he had been one of James' commissioners for ejecting the Fellows of Magdalen, Anne personally liked as much as she personally detested Lord Sunderland. Nothing shows more clearly how completely Sarah Churchill had by now allowed her political ambitions and interests to stifle whatever affection she felt for Anne and to blind her to the almost inevitable outcome of what she was doing, than this impolitic and inconsiderate attempt to force upon the Queen a man whom she must have known was not only distasteful to Anne, but who lacked the very qualities likely to soften that distaste, and whose constant attendance on her in his proposed office of Secretary of State would prove a continual

irritation. It was a difficult *coup* even for Sarah to bring off. Godolphin opposed it and her husband at first would not hear of it. But throughout the summer of 1705 when, disgusted with Dutch dilatoriness and cowardice, the incompetence of his allies, the perpetual diplomatic crisis which he alone seemed able to deal with, and above all with political intrigues at home, Marlborough was suffering in health and seriously contemplated resignation, Sarah sent him letter after letter insisting on the claims of the Whigs and of Sunderland in particular. At first she was unsuccessful, for Marlborough had too much on his hands to devote much attention to the grievances of the Whigs. In July he had won a great and almost bloodless victory when he forced the French lines at Tirlmont. "My dearest soul, my heart is so full of joy for this good success," he wrote to his wife, "that should I write more, I should say a great many follies." He is always careful to spare her anxiety as much as possible, but in answer to a letter in which she had evidently pleaded with him not to expose himself unnecessarily (an injunction echoed by the Queen, Godolphin and Harley), he writes: "As I would deserve and keep the kindness of this army I must let them see that when I expose them I would not exempt myself". Now in the summer of 1706, a still greater victory was to crown his patience and his genius, and on May 24th he sat down to write an account of the Battle of Ramillies to his beloved wife: "I did not tell my dearest soul in my last the design I had of engaging the enemy if possible to a battle, fearing the concern she has for me might make her uneasy; but I can now give her the satisfaction of letting her know that on Sunday last we fought and God Almighty has been pleased to give us a victory". Once again all was rejoicing at home; once again Queen Anne journeyed in state to St. Paul's, once again the letters poured in upon the Duke and the Duchess. Marlborough's one idea was to end the war quickly so that he might return and live quietly with the woman who was still everything to him. In every letter he wrote (and none of them were intended for the public) he reiterates this desire. "I love you so well," he wrote after Ramillies, "and am so desirous of ending my days quietly with you that I shall not venture

SARAH, DUCHESS OF MARLBOROUGH

myself but when it is absolutely necessary. . . . I am so persuaded that this campaign will bring us a good peace that I beg of you to do all you can that the house at Woodstock may be carried up as much as possible that I may have a prospect of living in it."

The prospect of living in it indeed began to look more and more tempting to Marlborough. Not only were his allies proving themselves more and more selfish, and even disloyal, but affairs at home were becoming more and more difficult and politicians more and more acrimonious. The dispute about Lord Sunderland had become acute by the autumn. The Whigs had by now made his appointment the price of their continued support even of the war itself. The Duchess had completely identified herself with their interests and recklessly importuned the Queen to give way, even supporting Godolphin in his expressed intention of resigning if Anne did not consent to the appointment, for he and Marlborough had both reluctantly been brought to urge the step they at first opposed, fearing the defection of the Whigs and the consequent imperilling of European affairs. Anne was unhappy and beginning to be resentful. She saw that Sunderland's appointment would be the thin end of the wedge and even while out of humour with the Tories, feared the ascendancy of the Whigs. She offered to compromise, to give Sunderland some other post which would not involve turning out her Tory Secretary of State. But the Whigs were adamant and poor Anne was bombarded by threats, importunities and warnings, *not the least vehement and insistent of which came from Mrs. Freeman.*

If this matter has been treated in a detail which may seem out of place except in political history, it has been because it was over this question that what had before been mere disagreement between Mrs. Morley and Mrs. Freeman now assumed the proportions almost of hostility. The Duchess has recorded that it was at this time that she first received a "peevish" letter from Anne. Absorbed in political business and increasingly irritated by the opposition of the Queen, she absented herself for long periods from the Court and the ties of friendship, which by a little personal kindness might have

been once more strengthened, were instead still further weakened by neglect, and Mrs. Morley began to lose sight of Mrs. Freeman the friend, so continually was she confronted by the Duchess of Marlborough the political opponent. The letters which had once been such a joy were now read almost with weariness and sometimes even in anger. Sarah's recklessness was never moderated by pen and ink. Sheets and sheets she covered in her "strange scrawl" (the expression is her own, and accurate) the pen flying over the paper and "tumbling out" (once more her phrase) the workings of her vehement mind and, what was more dangerous, finding it far too easy to express her irritable temper. "Having had the honour to know your majesty when you had other thoughts of me than you are pleased to have now . . . I could not reasonably imagine that you should be offended at my earnest endeavours to serve you, but finding that no proofs nor demonstrations of my faithfulness to your interest can make anything agreeable to your majesty that comes from me, I will not enlarge upon the subject."

The pity of it was that Sarah was not as good as her word; enlarge she did on this and similar subjects more often than was either kind or judicious. "I will tell you the greatest truths in the world," she wrote in October 1706, "which seldom succeed with anybody so well as flattery," and she goes on to say that recalling "everything to my memory that may fill my heart with all that passion and tenderness I had once for Mrs. Morley I do solemnly protest I think I can no ways return what I owe her so well as by being plain and honest." It was unfortunate that the truths that Mrs. Freeman found herself obliged to tell were, like almost all the truths told so unwillingly and so disinterestedly for one's good, unpleasant. But self-denial, apparently so easy when it comes to restraining from flattery, is less seldom exercised when it comes to dealing out honest censure, and Mrs. Morley was in the same letter informed that she was unreasonable, obstinate, ungrateful, vain and unjust!

Thus it was that Mrs. Freeman now addressed Mrs. Morley. Poor Anne, sometimes angry but more often troubled and hurt by coldness, neglect and recriminations, patheti

tried to smooth things over, convinced that if only Mrs Freeman would come and be with her more often she would be able to explain "Now that you are come hither again," she writes, "I hope you will not go to Woodstock without giving me one look, for whatever hard thoughts you may have had of me, I am sure I do not deserve them, and I will not be uneasy if you come to me, for though you are never so unkind I will ever preserve a most sincere and tender passion for my dear Mrs Freeman"

But Mrs Freeman herself tells us she was often absent from Court for as much as six weeks at a time preferring the life at Windsor Lodge or Holywell House where in her own house and garden she could occupy herself with her political affairs unhindered, and amuse herself by entertaining at her will all the brilliant and gifted men of her own party Anne's court was not particularly brilliant Her increasing ill-health from gout and her husband's from asthma made the business of entertaining irksome to her Elizabeth Adams wrote mournfully to Sir John Verney on 6 February 13th, 1704, "There never is any balls at court now"¹ And Lady Wentworth² chronicles on March 9th, 1705 that on Anne's birthday there was 'great rejoicing, all the ladies and gentlemen in their birthday clothes³ But the Queen would not give them a baul (*sic*) nor play' Sarah was specially fond of the opera, just then coming into fashion, and a special performance or the appearance of a celebrated Italian singer could often draw her to town, when Mrs Morley's requests were ignored Anne seldom now went to the theatre and seldom ordered plays at court Between 1704 and 1706, we are told⁴ there were but four plays commanded to be acted at St James These were *All for Love*, *The Cautious Coxcomb*, *The Merry Wives of Windsor* and *The Anatomist* The drama certainly owed little to the patronage of Anne, though of this list it may be said that fifty per cent of the plays were good ones⁵ But if the Court was dull, some of the Whig lords

¹ Verney Letters

² Wentworth Papers

³ Always an occasion for special finery Cf Pope glittering as a birth night beau

⁴ J Shepherd St James Palace

were famed for entertaining. Halifax, we are told, gave special concerts for the Duchess and Wharton had a great stable at Chelsey converted into a playhouse where, Lady Verney tells us, "we have all been to see great things, a fine scaramouch."¹

So that it was probably with truth that Anne complained to Godolphin that Mrs. Freeman "never came near her".

All hopes were now pinned on Marlborough, who was due home in November 1706. The Duchess was counting on him to persuade the Queen to consent to Sunderland's appointment, and Harley and St. John and the moderate Tories hoped that his influence might stem the flowing tide of Whig power in the government. It all fell out, however, as her Grace had wished. Anne finally consented, though with great and obvious reluctance, to turn out Sir Charles Hedges and admit Sunderland as Secretary of State. The Tories were now even excluded from the Privy Council, and at the opening of Parliament at the end of 1706 the Whigs swept the board. Godolphin and Wharton were made earls. The latter was disliked by the Queen partly on account of his profligate life and partly because he had been a close friend of William. Harley and St. John alone remained of the old Tory party. The Duchess had accomplished what she set out to do when Anne ascended the throne. The Whigs were in power. But she was as yet far from realising the price she would have to pay for the methods which had won her success.

¹ *Verney Papers.* 1705.

CHAPTER XII

THE victory for the moment was with the Duchess and the Whigs. But Anne soon showed that not for nothing was she a Stuart, with a Stuart's obstinacy and above all a Stuart's sense of prerogative. Had she not touched for the king's evil, believing herself, as Queen, endowed with a miraculous power of healing? Humiliated and resentful at the forcing upon her of a minister she disliked, it is easy to understand why she turned gratefully towards anyone who restored her self-respect, and endeavoured to assert herself in a sphere of influence she felt peculiarly her own—that of the Church. Yet even here she was opposed by Mrs. Freeman, who wanted the livings in the gift of the Crown filled up by Cowper, as Lord Keeper. Anne clung tenaciously to her privilege, observing that in her opinion "the Crown can never have too many livings at its own disposal . . . it is a power I can never think it reasonable to part with." When she did fill the livings it was to the consternation of the Whigs, for she gave most of them to Tory and High Church divines. The Whigs were furious, believing that Marlborough and Godolphin were withdrawing the support they had recently given, and the Duchess, not yet able to believe that her power over Anne was waning, continued her former policy of endless letters filled with arguments and accusations and sedulously kept away from St. James'. Godolphin told her that he believed Harley to be at the back of these Church appointments and that his loyalty was not as firm as he would like it to be believed. There had been trouble over the Union with Scotland—mostly the work of Godolphin and Somers. Harley had opposed and embarrassed the government in some details. Now it seemed he was, though not openly, supporting the remnant of the Tories in this affair of the

Church appointments, where every Tory Bishop meant a vote in the House of Lords. This did not surprise Sarah, for she had never trusted Harley. But another rumour which reached her at the same time did surprise her, though she counted it so fantastic that she gave it little attention. Abigail Hill, they said, was known to discuss State affairs with the Queen. Abigail! A woman of the bedchamber! Sarah's own cousin and dependent! Abigail, the shy, the retiring, the unattractive, the obsequious! Why, Anne had even been jealous of Sarah's kindness to her not so very long ago and had warned Sarah against taking too much notice of her and taking her to the opera when she (Anne) could not go. Sarah, to be sure, had occasionally allowed Abigail, who never seemed to mind the task, to relieve her of what had by now become a burden—amusing the Queen's leisure with gossip and trivialities—trifles for which Sarah had no longer either the time or the inclination. It was true she had been told some story by a Mrs. Danvers, one of the bedchamber women, when, believing herself to be dying, she had sent for the Duchess and confided to her various accusations against Abigail, saying that she was secretly working against her Grace. But Sarah thought it an exaggerated tale. She mentioned it, however, to her husband, but only incidentally, as we gather from Marlborough's answer, dated June 9th, 1707. "If you are sure that Mrs. Hill does speak of business to the Queen, I should think you might speak to her with some caution, which might do good, for she certainly is grateful and will mind what you say." But no sooner had she dismissed it from her mind than the Duchess heard a still more curious tale. Abigail Hill was Abigail Hill no longer. She was Abigail Masham. She had married a Groom of the Bedchamber to Prince George. That in itself was surprising. Sarah might well have been told of the marriage of her own cousin whom she had befriended and herself brought to Court. But Abigail had always been a queer, secretive kind of woman, almost unnaturally self-effacing and deferential, "and", says Sarah, "I was willing to impute it to bashfulness and want of breeding rather than to anything worse." So, though justifiably offended, she was willing to overlook it

and indeed ready to help the bridal pair. What followed was ironic. Abigail, thought Sarah, would need an intercessor with the Queen, who should out of courtesy be consulted about the marriages of her personal servants. The all-powerful Duchess was willing to mediate. But, instead of the gratitude she waited for, she was met with embarrassment and hesitation, and Abigail finally admitted that the Queen, she thought, had already been informed of her marriage. This was a more serious matter. Mrs. Morley should have had no secrets from Mrs. Freeman, especially in an affair which concerned her so nearly. It was all very odd and rather disturbing. She went at once to the Queen and reproached her for her concealment, but Anne relapsed into the sulky obstinacy that Sarah should by now have recognised as her invariable method of dissimulation, and all she would say in answer to the questions and reproaches levelled at her by the Duchess was "I have bid Masham tell you a hundred times and she would not." Sarah, excited and angry, set to work to prove the mystery. Within a week a mine had exploded under her feet. Not only had the Queen known of her cousin's marriage, but she had actually been present, stealing down with the bride by night to the rooms of the Tory physician, Dr. Arbuthnot, to attend the ceremony which, for no very convincing reason, was to be kept a secret from the Duchess. Further, she had bestowed a portion on the bride. *Now* Sarah knew why she had recently wanted a large sum from the Privy Purse and given no account of its destination. Obsequious spies and tattlers all came with their gossip, and Sarah learnt with thunderstruck fury that while she had been absorbed in political schemes at Windsor Lodge and Holywell House, Mrs. Morley, who needed a friend more than a mentor, had sought elsewhere for the sympathy and companionship denied her by Mrs. Freeman, and had turned to the waiting woman supplied her by Mrs. Freeman herself. It all came out. Abigail had apparently been in the habit of spending the greater part of every afternoon with the Queen while George slept. That in itself would have been bad, for Sarah, though she had neglected Anne, would certainly not admit that anyone else had any right to the Queen's privacy. But worse



ABIGAIL HILL, AFTERWARDS LADY MASHAM (?)

From a portrait in the National Portrait Gallery



was to follow. It appeared that Abigail had been using her newly-acquired favour for political ends, and by carrying messages, repeating conversations and arranging interviews, had assisted Harley to gain the ear of the Queen and stiffen her resistance to the Whigs. For Harley, astutely perceiving the rising favour of Mrs. Hill, opportunely discovered a fact which he had previously found it convenient to overlook, and claimed the lady as a relation—a second cousin by marriage. So, at various afternoon parties where Abigail played the harpsichord to the Queen Harley made a third, and accompanied by the tinkle of gigue or sonatina would adroitly sympathise with Anne in her difficulties over the Whigs, and suggest measures for her relief. Mrs. Freeman could obviously count no longer on being the only one with access to the ear of the Queen. She must now share even her friendship with a dependant and a waiting woman. Sarah Churchill had had too many years of absolute power to be able to meet this situation with coolness or wisdom, even if her temperament had inclined her to either. The temper which, always hasty and never controlled, had with the passage of years become more violent flamed out. As usual, she flew to that most dangerous of all weapons in the hands of the impulsive—her pen—and wrote to the Queen from Woodstock accusing her of deceit and disloyalty. The Queen's answer will sufficiently show the unguarded and arrogant tone the Duchess assumed. "You are pleased to accuse me," wrote Anne, "of several things in your last letter very unjustly, especially concerning Masham. You say I avoided giving you a direct answer¹ to what I must know is your greatest uneasiness, giving it a turn as if it were only the business of the day that had occasioned your suspicion. What I told you in my letter is very true and no turn, as you are pleased to call it."

Abigail, meanwhile, judging that when confronted with her Grace of Marlborough in a passion discretion was undoubtedly the better part of valour—an opinion shared by many at Court—prudently avoided her, only sending after her to Woodstock a politic letter, judged by the Duchess, one imagines

¹ This was more than probably the truth!

with truth, to be a production of Harley's. In this Abigail very cleverly disclaimed all treachery, demanding to know the name of her accuser—a demand that she knew could not be met. Sarah replied shortly, asking for an interview when she returned to town. In October the Queen went to Newmarket for the autumn meeting, taking with her Abigail and her husband, of whom we know very little more than the Duchess' description of him as "a soft, good-natured, insignificant man, always making low bows to everybody and ready to skip to open a door". The correspondence went on intermittently until the autumn, angry and reproachful on the side of the Duchess and alternately defensive and pleading on the side of the Queen, and by November, 1707, Sarah was writing to her friend Sir William Trumbull¹ that she no longer had any influence at Court because of Mrs. Masham, while to another friend, Sir William Trent,² she writes on November 13th, "'Tis plain you live in the country by your writing to me to ask a favour of the Queen, to whom I never have the honour to speak of anything but what concerns my own offices and in that I can't prevail according to custom", and she goes on to recount the present favour of Abigail. She once more made use of her threat of the resignations of Godolphin and the Duke, a threat which still produced the required effect on the Queen, who felt that with her Treasurer and Commander-in-Chief she at least knew where she was, and moreover they both treated her with consideration and kindness, even when she differed from them politically. She made another effort to effect a reconciliation with the Duchess, and wrote to her as follows:

"My dear Mrs. Freeman, I cannot go to bed without renewing a request I have so often made, that you would banish all unkind and unjust thoughts of your poor unfortunate faithful Morley, which I saw by the glimpse I had of you yesterday, you were full of. Indeed I do not deserve them, and if you could see my heart, you would find it as sincere, as tender, and as passionately fond of you as ever, and as truly sensible of your kindness in telling me your

¹ Downshire MSS. H.M.C.

² *ib.*

MRS. MORLEY AND MRS. FREEMAN

mind freely upon all occasions. Nothing shall ever alter me. Though we have the misfortune to differ in some things, I will ever be the same to my dear dear Mrs. Freeman, who I do assure you once more I am more tenderly and sincerely hers than it is possible to express."

Affectionately though this letter is phrased, upon the main point the Queen was obviously not disposed to give way. When the Duchess returned to town, the expected interview with Abigail did not at once take place, and she complained once more to the Queen that Mrs. Masham had shown no signs of fulfilling her promise to clear up matters with her offended relative. But the Queen, to Sarah's consternation and anger, still took Mrs. Masham's part, saying that it was quite natural that Mrs. Masham should stay away, and that she was very much in the right since the Duchess was so angry with her. To all Sarah's arguments she returned the same answer. Anne never argued. Her mind did not work like that. She just said again what she had said at first, and was prepared if necessary to go on saying it until her opponent was tired of arguing. It was a simple method and it worked admirably, for in the end it could not fail to reduce anyone attempting arguments to frenzy. Abigail however, perhaps in response to a hint from the Queen, did eventually make up her mind to face the interview. The Duchess reproached her for having concealed her intimacy with the Queen, saying, justly enough, that such concealment could not but come from motives that could scarcely be above suspicion. Abigail's reply showed once for all the terms on which she then was with Anne. No longer did she fear her Grace of Marlborough. She stood secure, sure of her power, daring even Sarah Churchill to dislodge her from the place she had won in the affections of the Queen. So, with what must have been a calculated insult, she informed Mrs. Freeman with gravity that she was sure the Queen would always be very kind to her! Sarah could not believe her ears. The shock of what she had heard actually kept her silent for the space, she tells us, of some minutes. Kind to her! She whom Mrs. Morley had adored! She who had reigned supreme in Mrs. Morley's heart for

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¹ Downshire MSS. H.M.C.

² *ib.*

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thirty years! Then, regaining her speech, she returned once more to the charges of ingratitude and treachery which Abigail not very convincingly repelled, and the interview ended in coldness and formality.

After this, the situation between the Queen and the Duchess was made very much worse by the action of the Whig party, headed by Wharton and Somers, in attacking the administration of the Navy under Admiral Churchill¹ and enquiring into the abuses for which Prince George, its head, could not but be held responsible. Anne, who was always abnormally sensitive about George and very protective towards him, bitterly resented this enquiry on the part of the Whigs, and from a letter of Sarah's of October 29th, printed in the correspondence² without explanation and unferred to elsewhere, we may deduce that she was foolish enough, even at this juncture, to make use, in her defence of her party, of indiscreet expressions regarding the Prince Consort. Anne complained to Godolphin, who seems to have persuaded Sarah to write some sort of apology, though its tone of lecturing and self-justification can have done little to soothe the Queen's anger. Events were in this state when the Duchess went to visit the Queen during the Christmas holidays and not only found Mrs. Masham on the threshold, but was received by Anne with constraint and marked coldness. "The Queen," she says, "with a great deal of disorder in her face, and without speaking one word, took me by the hand. And when thereupon I stooped to kiss hers, she took me up with a very cold embrace, and then without one kind word let me go."

A pitiful scene, to be the knell of that curious friendship which had started so long ago between two little girls at the court of James, Duke of York. Anne, ill at ease, apologetic yet unrepentant, unable to rekindle even some few cold embers of a love which had once almost consumed her. Sarah, hurt, angry, unable to understand or believe that no longer was the soul of the Queen of England hers to mould as she would, conscious only that according to her lights she had, throughout their long association, never acted but as she considered

¹ Marlborough's brother.

² 1838 See Appendix I, Letter A.

for the highest interests of the woman who was now rejecting her for a someone immeasurably her inferior in every way, someone who, she thought, had stolen the Queen from her by stealth while her back was turned, someone who was in the highest degree her debtor. It was a bitter moment. But the door that closed behind the Duchess of Marlborough when she took her ceremonious leave of Queen Anne that day in December, 1707, closed also on a friendship that had been the pivot of two lives and for some fateful years had moulded the destinies of Europe.

And the tragedy of it for Sarah Churchill, even more than for Anne Stuart, was that neither then nor ever afterwards did she realise that the love that had died in Anne had been gradually but inevitably killed, not by any upstart interloper or treacherous friend, but by Sarah Churchill herself. Abigail Hill had no power but what had been given her by the Duchess, no door open to her but what had been opened by the Duchess' blindness and egotism. Blind she had been when she failed to perceive that for someone of Anne's temperament the romantic and emotional expressions of friendship were essential, that Anne's instincts were not regal, in that she could not stand alone. She needed someone to cling to, someone who would be kind to her, sympathise with her over real and imaginary troubles and share the problems, grave and trivial, of her everyday life. She was after all a very lonely woman. George of course was kind, but George was now nearly always drunk, asleep or ill; and anyhow, her attitude to George had always been three-quarters maternal. He was perhaps the only being on earth who depended on her. In her semi-private life as Princess of Denmark, Sarah Churchill had stood for all she needed, and had given generously of her time, help and sympathy. But when Anne came to the throne Sarah had found other and more important interests, and Annie was left lonely and hurt. Then there came Mistress Hill. She was not quite on the same footing as the other waiting-women, for was she not the cousin of the adored Sarah herself? She had had special duties. Many a night had she spent helping Anne to support poor Prince George through the paroxysms of his asthma, and these things make a bond. As she came

to know her better, Anne found that the dull, unattractive exterior, so sharply contrasting with Sarah's beauty and vividness, held qualities which she, Anne, could not but find comforting. Hill was always there in contrast to Sarah who was there so seldom. Hill was always ready to listen to Anne's trivialities and to contribute her own share of court gossip. When Sarah came she always seemed to want to talk politics—usually politics distasteful to Anne—and would scarcely listen to Anne's side of it all, and sometimes Anne had even felt that Mrs. Freeman was bored with her. Hill seemed to have a real affection for her, too. Of course, Mrs. Freeman loved her; but it would make things so much easier if only she would show it a little sometimes, in the way Hill seemed to be able to do. And then Anne made a further and even more important discovery. On the matter nearest her heart she and Hill were agreed, for Abigail was a devoted adherent to the High Church party. Mrs. Morley could no longer persuade herself that she and Mrs. Freeman were agreed about the Church. She saw too clearly that Mrs. Freeman belonged irrevocably to the party that would encourage Dissenters and, if permitted, even rob her of her royal prerogative. But Hill and her kind friend Mr. Harley both encouraged her to be "*Queen indeed*" and had told her quite plainly that she was but a cypher in the hands of the Marlboroughs. Anne had enough Stuart blood in her to feel the sting of the phrase. She was a Stuart after all, and recently the events of the Revolution growing dim to her memory, she had found herself thinking more and more about her unknown and exiled brother. On this subject she could never really open her heart to Mrs. Freeman, who, she knew, had never swerved from her allegiance to the Protestant succession, whatever they might have said about Mr. Freeman and St. Germains. In 1705 Anne had been sent a miniature of James Francis Edward, Prince of Wales, and at the sight of the pictured Stuart face had burst into tears and kissed it passionately, a proceeding which we may believe took place in the absence of Mrs. Freeman who would at once have bluntly asked her, as she had done before, whether she was prepared to hand over her crown to him. No. She could never talk of

her brother to Mrs. Freeman. But Mrs. Hill sympathised even over this, and was ready sometimes to discuss the possibility of James Francis succeeding his sister—with, of course, proper guarantees for the safety of the Church. Sarah would merely have quoted James II and *his* treatment of guarantees. There had seemed so much that she could not discuss with Mrs. Freeman, but which she could discuss with Mrs. Hill. Mrs. Freeman, too, was so strong. She never seemed tired and she often tired Anne now. Mrs. Hill had had bad health herself and though Mrs. Freeman was quite admirable in real illness—practical and dependable—she could not understand, as Abigail did, what it was never to feel quite well and have to struggle against recurring pain with the gout.

All these things make it easy to see why events had been shaping themselves with Anne so as to lead to that sad interview in the Christmas of 1707. But to Sarah Churchill, too egotistical to be any psychologist, it only seemed as if she were being discarded by a woman whom she had served to the best of her ability, and betrayed by a woman she had befriended. Had she understood either Anne or herself a little better she would have seen that, without adaptability and much self-sacrifice on her part, the friendship with Anne was doomed once Anne came to the throne. It was perhaps doomed in any case, for when Sarah Churchill allied herself with the party which stood for the toleration of dissent and the limitation of the royal prerogative, she was pitting herself against the granite-like Stuart obstinacies and prejudices, which experience should have taught her were insusceptible to the claims of reason, affection, or anything else. To this political blindness she had added psychological blindness. She was totally unable either to understand or appreciate a character so fundamentally different from her own as was Anne's. Education might have helped her in a later age, but education Sarah had had none. Hardship and trouble might have forced it on her, but apart from her son's death, life had gone too easily with her, and she had known no will but her own. She had never had any need to study the temperaments and needs of others. She had always been stronger than those around her and if they did not please her or she them, she went her self-sufficient

way without them. Apart from her husband, she had been until now independent of human relationships in their deeper aspects. Otherwise she would have perceived that when she denied herself to Anne and substituted political lectures for the language of human affection she was giving Anne a stone where she asked for bread. She drained the life-blood of her friendship with Anne by robbing it of romance, because romance was a thing which, outside her love for John Churchill, she neither needed nor understood, whereas for Anne it was as necessary as the air she breathed.

If we have treated this question with such detail in this place rather than later, it has been because, although the rupture between the Queen and the Duchess was not at this time final, the friendship between Mrs. Morley and Mrs. Freeman inevitably entered upon its final stage this Christmas, and what survived was scarcely worthy of the name. The wounds they had dealt each other were mortal, and what lived on in their outward relations was but the ghost of past affection. That Sarah realised this is made quite clear by the letter she wrote to the Queen after their parting.¹ The Duchess unfortunately in her "Conduct" does not give us the Queen's answer, though she says that in it she "very much softened what had passed". Anne, who could not even now lightly bring herself to cut Mrs. Freeman out of her heart, may have blinded herself to the fact that nothing could ever be the same again. But Sarah, curiously clear-sighted in some ways however blind in others, knew, even if she refused for the moment to face it, that something had been shattered that was beyond repair and that, whatever illusion they presented to the world in future, Mrs. Morley would never again be passionately and tenderly Mrs. Freeman's.

¹ See Appendix I, Letter B.

CHAPTER XIII

MRS. MASHAM and Harley were not left very long in enjoyment of their triumph, for Marlborough was now in England and recent events had forced him to realise that his trust in Harley had been misplaced. In December, when his suspicions and those of Godolphin and the Whigs had been dramatically confirmed, a clerk in Harley's office was discovered to be guilty of transmitting important information to France, and he had been enabled to do this by the carelessness (to put it no higher) with which Harley left secret documents lying about.

Although Gregg by his own confession cleared the Secretary of complicity, feeling against him was so strong that Marlborough actually wrote to the Queen and told her that neither he nor Godolphin was prepared to serve any longer with Harley after his "false and treacherous proceeding".

Anne was now at last face to face with a choice with which she had been threatened several times before by the Duchess. Marlborough and Godolphin or Mrs. Masham and Harley? She tried to temporise, and it was clear that she was prepared to sacrifice Godolphin but not her Commander-in-chief. Harley could replace Godolphin, but who could replace the victor of Blenheim and Ramillies? At the next cabinet council both the Treasurer and the General were absent and the council refused to deliberate, and broke up in disorder. The public was roused by the news and Harley realised that though the Queen was even now unwilling to part with him—not for nothing was Anne a daughter of James II—the only thing left was for him to resign, which he accordingly did, his place being taken by Mr. Boyle, a Whig. St. John, his ally, also quitted his post as secretary at war which was filled on the recommendation of Godolphin and the Duchess by an able young man named Robert Walpole.

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Harley was gone, but there remained Mrs Masham, and as long as she was there he could, as the Duchess says, "under pretence of visiting her have all the opportunities he could wish for the practising upon the passions and credulity of the Queen" Mrs Masham's power was not only increasing, but becoming more dangerous In these critical circumstances Sarah resolved to try, apparently as a last expediency, the device of being "easy and quiet" Anne, who was only too glad of a little ease and quiet, was quite willing to meet her, and some kind of reconciliation was patched up by which Mrs Morley and Mrs Freeman could live at least outwardly upon friendly terms, and Mrs Freeman came sometimes as of old five or six mights running to see Mrs Morley, and Vanbrugh wrote to Lord Manchester that she "was often at Court and mighty well there, but the Queen's fondness for the other lady is not to be expressed" It was too late The Queen received the Duchess with civility, even with friendliness, but her Grace learnt from the page of honour that her departure was almost invariably the signal for Mrs Masham's entry Sarah brooded over this painful and humiliating situation and it began to be more and more difficult to keep her resolution of being "easy and quiet" as the proofs of Abigail's intimacy and influence were forced upon her both by friends who thought to do her a service by their information and by enemies who enjoyed her discomfiture It was indeed a different world for Abigail The far-off days as nursery-maid to Lady Rivers must have seemed like a dream from which she had awakened to find herself confidante to the Queen of England and now beginning to be courted by those great lords whose business it was to scan the weathercock of royal favour The Duchess has left us a little vignette by which we can judge the position almost to a nicety Writing of Lord Halifax¹ she says, "He had made a great entertainment for me at Hampton Court when it was only whispered that Mrs Masham was the growing favourite with the Queen She happened to be there in the gardens just before I came with my old Lady Bellasis and was so alarmed at hearing that I was coming that she went away and dined at an inn without seeing the gardens

¹ Coke MSS British Museum

and house; but my Lord Halifax not knowing but she might succeed went to her and made great compliments and expressed great concern that he could not have liberty to entertain her being before engaged to me, but sent her all manner of wine and good things to the inn, and at dinner made his court to me by laughing at her the whole time . . . making a thousand jests and ridiculing her and her favour and I believe he diverted her as much afterwards with me."

It was hard for Sarah to have to share with Abigail the homage and flattery that had before been hers alone, and her temper stood the strain but ill. Poor Marlborough, with the burden of European war and diplomacy upon him as well as the troubles of political factions at home, was now called upon to mediate between his wife, over whom he alone was felt to have any influence, and the Queen who felt personal affection for him alone amongst her ministers. Marlborough spent so much of his life in charming hostile and refractory colleagues that Anne, for whom he still had a very real regard, was but one more of their number. "You know," she wrote to him, "I have often had the misfortune of falling under the Duchess of Marlborough's displeasure, and now, after several reconciliations, she is again relapsed into her cold unkind way, and by a letter she wrote me on Monday, I find she has taken a resolution not to come to me when I am alone and fancies nobody will take notice of the change. . . . Can she think that the Duchess of Somerset and Lady Fitzharding who are two of the most observing prying ladies in England won't find out that she never comes near me nor looks on me as she used to do, that the tattling voice will not in a little time make us the jest of the town? Some people will blame her, others me and a great many both . . . for the Duchess of Marlborough's, your own and my poor sake, endeavour all you can to persuade Mrs. Freeman out of this strange unreasonable resolution. I have not as yet ventured to make any answer to her letter, nor dare not, for till this violent humour be over all I can say, though never so reasonable, will but inflame her the more."

It is worth noticing the reason given by Anne for placating the Duchess—that she does not want them to be the talk of

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the town. A far cry this from the time when Mrs. Morley had assured Mrs. Freeman that if she would ever consent to Mrs. Freeman's leaving her might she never see the face of heaven. But Mrs. Morley had had much to bear, even if she were not herself guiltless of disloyalty, and it is quite clear that a situation had arisen which would have proved impossible to the most philosophic, and that Sarah's never equable temper was not able to bear the constant provocation of witnessing her rival's favour whenever she came to Court and seeing herself supplanted as often as she closed Anne's door and found Mrs. Masham waiting outside to open it.

For the rest, there were other things to be attended to beside wrangling with Abigail. The Whigs were, after all, in power (though not as completely as they wished), and the Duchess of Marlborough as the prime agent in their ascendancy and the wife of the one man the Queen seemed unable and unwilling to dispense with still had enough political power for her to be feared and courted, and there were still a few last Tories to be driven from minor offices. The building at Woodstock, too, was beginning to engross much of her time and attention. Vanbrugh had not turned out altogether to her satisfaction. The work seemed to be a great deal more elaborate, costly and tedious than anyone had bargained for, and she was the more anxious to press it on as in every letter from abroad her husband, who had set his heart on the "house" as he called it, wrote longingly of the time when he would be free to retire there and live quietly with his dearest soul. Her correspondence at this time is often dated from Woodstock. She seems to have gone there frequently for two and three days together, and must have spent a great deal of time in her coach, for the letters are dated, often at very short intervals, from St. Albans, Windsor and London as well as Woodstock. The part played by Sarah in the building operations is fairly well indicated by a letter which Godolphin had written the Duke as far back as September 1706. "The garden is already very fine," he wrote, "and in perfect shape; the turf all laid and the first coat of the gravel; the greens high and thriving and the hedges pretty well grown. The building is so far advanced that one may see perfectly how it will be

when it is done. The side where you intend to live is the most forward part. My Lady Marlborough is extremely prying into, and has really not only found a great many errors, but very well mended such of them as could not stay for your decision. I am apt to think she has made Mr. Vanbrugh a little [?angry]¹ but you will find both ease and comfort from it."

The building certainly had advanced considerably, for in the summer of 1708 the Duchess was already concerning herself with the furnishing of the rooms and writing to her friend Lord Manchester, English Ambassador at Venice, to get her silks, velvets and brocades of which he had sent her patterns, either from there or from Genoa. She had, moreover, begun to suspect that, the work being carried out at the expense of the Government, everybody concerned in it proposed to line their own pockets either by commission, contracts or specially high prices—which was more than probable—and it is worth noting that her Grace's contentions with the contractors and the architect about prices began at a time when the building was costing the Churchill family nothing at all. As early as 1708 she is questioning the price of the carriage of stone from the quarries and pointing out that it exceeded the estimate and had been undertaken elsewhere at a lower rate.

The interior was to be furnished in accordance with Vanbrugh's plan of Magnificence, if of nothing else. Sarah wants green, yellow, blue and scarlet damask, plain blue and plain scarlet velvet, scarlet and blue satin, and would like mightily scarlet figured velvet. These were for chair covers, and window and door curtains. Every calculation had been carefully made. Altogether she required 4,755 yards of material at a cost of £2,139!

Manchester was most obliging. "You have had the goodness to give yourself more trouble in my small affairs than I thought it possible for a man to do," she wrote, "and are more particular and exact than ever I met with anybody in

¹ In the copy made of this letter, which appears amongst the Coxe MSS. (9123) in the British Museum, there is a blank here. Godolphin's handwriting, is not very legible, but if the blank had been left for that reason it would certainly be indicated as such. The omission occurs at the end of a line and was probably inadvertent. The missing word is probably in the original letter.

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my life." There was a friendship between the Earl and the Duchess. Writing to her from Venice in March 1708, he speaks of the "obligations I have in the marks of her Majesty's favour which I am sensible is owing in some measure to your goodness, the continuation of which I shall do my utmost to deserve".

He was also a friend of Vanbrugh whose relations with the Duchess were evidently quite friendly in 1708 (in spite of the price of transport!) for the Earl asked his good offices with her on a subject in which she was known to be interested—music. He had recommended a Venetian musician to her, skilled, he says, on the guitar, hautboy and harpsichord, and asks if he could not be given a permanent post at Court. The Duchess's answer is interesting. "I think nothing is more wanted in this country than such a person as your lordship describes," she writes, "but the Queen has so little time that she never heard any of her own music among which is some very good." And she goes on, "But if I were to retire from court, which some time or other may be one's lot, I think one could not bestow money better than take such a person into one's house". This was the first time she had spoken openly about retiring from Court. Her interest in opera might have inclined her to Vanbrugh, half of whose time was spent in the theatrical and operatic world. The popularity of opera was the object of some satirical comments on the part of an odd, bitter-tongued, yet curiously compelling divine who was in London just now and known to be in the Whig interest. "We are here nine times madder after opera than ever," wrote Jonathan Swift¹ to Robert Hunter, "and have got a new castrato from Italy called Nicolini who exceeds Valentini I know not how many bars' length." The Duchess was known to patronise Nicolini, who sang at a special performance of *Camilla* in honour of the Duke, and later in the year Lady Wentworth² records in spelling which throughout her correspondence is too original to spoil by correction, "The Dutchess of Molbery has got Estallian to sing . . . at the rehersell of the operer". The same lady's

¹ *Letters*, Jan. 12, 1708.

² *Wentworth Papers*.

account of the progress of Blenheim is worth transcribing. "The duke of Molberry who is billding the finest hous at Woodstock that ever was seen; thear is three-score rooms of a flower [floor], noe stairs only a little pair that goes to the uper rooms which ar only for sarvents." Lady Wentworth, though a Tory, was at this time still kindly disposed towards the Duchess, who threw her household into a flutter of *chiffons* by inviting her daughter to dinner. To her son at the Hague Lady Wentworth wrote from Twickenham, "Your sister has been very kindly yoused by the Dutchess of Molberry. Her grace came here to see her and sent three days afterwards to invite her to dinner and all this day we have had mantoe [mantle] wemen, tire-wemen and all sorts of traids".

The glimpses of Sarah Churchill in her private capacity are hard to come by and can only be gained by exploring every possible (and impossible) source for a chance reference. But with these few details we can perhaps fill in a background to the more public and dramatic events of which she was the centre in these years, and see her superintending her gardens and buildings, interesting herself in music, making calculations for chair-covers, entertaining her political and private friends, constantly in her coach, constantly writing letters, dealing with streams of visitors and officials, and we may be fairly safe in guessing that there were not many empty minutes in her day.

Political questions still occupied most of her time. Early in the year there had been an attempted invasion of Scotland by the "Pretender", as the son of James II was then called, although the Tories had assured the Queen that "there was not a Jacobite left in the land". It came to nothing, but it increased the power of the Whigs who now accused many of the Tories of disaffection and Jacobitism, began to demand the few places left in the government which they did not already hold, and pressed especially for the appointment of Lord Somers, one of their most distinguished adherents, to the Presidency of the Council. At first the Duchess refused to have anything to do with it. She had finished with politics; she had no more power; she wished to retire—or so she

clared just then. This we gather both from her own letters and from one written to her by Lord Sunderland, for whom at this time she tells us she had "a very real regard".

"April 6, 1708: A Dutch mail came this morning by which we have reason to hope that Lord Marlborough is determined to return for some days. I can't but rejoice extremely at it because I think it is of the last consequence to everything here; and besides will bring you back to us again, which I heartily wish, not only for the satisfaction it would be to all friends, but because I am more and more convinced of what I took the liberty of saying to you before you went out of town, that I am sure your absenting yourself for any long time is just doing what yours and all our enemies desire and proclaiming to the whole world what they by all arts, endeavour to make people believe. . . . I beg pardon for touching on this subject, which I know is not agreeable to you, but I think it of so much consequence that I could not help doing it." Marlborough shared his son-in-law's opinions, writing to his wife, "I must own that I am of the same mind with your friends, that you cannot oblige Mrs. Masham more than by being at a distance from the queen". But he understood both Sarah and Anne better than anyone else, for he adds, "I value your quiet and happiness so much, and being almost persuaded that it is next to impossible to change the inclinations of the queen I would not have you constrain yourself in anything".

The Whigs needed all the help they could get—for news of the changing situation in England had reached Europe and had not only encouraged the Pretender to make his attempt in Scotland but was now endangering the loyalty of Marlborough's allies, never very firm. "The credit of Mrs. Masham occasions a good deal of disagreeable discourse in this country," wrote Marlborough from the Hague. Holland in particular having gained what she most wanted—the security of her own frontiers—showed every disposition to leave the other powers to take care of themselves. The usual treaty was made between the allies binding each of them to make no separate peace. But Marlborough and Godolphin both felt that unless the power of the Whigs were consolidated at home, they could not rely on continued support of the war,

which had not yet accomplished the purposes for which it had been declared. Poor Godolphin upon whom, now that the Duchess was absent, fell all the burden of trying to move Anne's rock-like obstinacy, especially over Somers, wrote that "Mr. Montgomery's life is a burden to him, and like to be so more and more every day". Every step taken and every letter written was communicated to the Duchess both by her husband and the Treasurer for her comment and approval, and although she no longer took the same direct part in affairs her influence and direction were still active. Her confidential friend and agent was Arthur Maynwaring, a friend of Godolphin holding a minor post in the government. From him she received almost daily, long letters acquainting her in the greatest detail with every move in the political game. So completely did she trust his friendship and fidelity that she showed him all her correspondence with the Queen, a trust he never betrayed. He joined in the general entreaty to her to return. "For God's sake madam come to court again," he says, and although his flattery is excessive and wearisome, he seems to have been genuinely attached to her.

The Whigs were getting more and more impatient of the Queen's continued opposition to their wishes, the Allies more and more inclining to a peace, Godolphin was more and more harassed and Harley gaining more and more influence with the Queen through the agency of Mrs. Masham. In July there came news of Marlborough's success at Oudenarde where, by a victory over Vendome, he had changed a military situation of great peril created by the capture by the French of Ghent and Bruges into a rout of the French army, though not without grievous toll of lives. The news did something though not much to restore solidarity at home and abroad, and a thanksgiving at St. Paul's was ordered. Now perhaps might Anne and Sarah recapture, if but for a moment, the feelings that had made Blenheim a common triumph and a common joy. But as the State coach rolled to St. Paul's the two women in it (George was not well enough to go) sat together not only in hostility but in recrimination. Even on that morning things had gone wrong. Sarah was Mistress of the Robes and it was her part to prepare the Queen's dresses

and jewels for ceremonial occasions Happy and proud, she laid out the jewels which Anne should wear in honour of the hero of the day—Sarah's husband But Anne, with a singular want not only of tact but of consideration, refused to wear them, either because she did not wish to wear any jewels, or, as the Duchess asserts (though without any proof), at the instigation of Mrs Masham The Queen had, we are told,¹ exclaimed on hearing of the victory at Oudenarde, "Lord, when will this bloodshed cease?" The expression rings true, though it may not have been used on this occasion, for it is not in moments of victory that we are most apt to remember the horrors and crimes of war For whatever reason however, the Duchess' arrangement of the jewels was rejected and the Duchess' temper flamed out and she lost control of herself The incident soon led to an altercation which actually continued during the journey through the cheering, shouting crowds that lined the streets to the Cathedral The Duchess accused the Queen of slighting the man whose victory they were then celebrating, and, in her anger on his behalf, threw all decorum and restraint to the winds, as the Queen, getting out of the coach at the Cathedral steps, turned to her to answer some reproach or accusation, she was abruptly bidden to be silent! So passed the thanksgiving for Oudenarde The usual interchange of letters followed, for Sarah could never abandon the delusion that her pen could as required either supplement or atone for her tongue The letter she sent Anne was scarcely calculated to mend affairs The arrogance of it² shows that Sarah never could and never would realise that to harass the already estranged Queen with arguments and reproaches written in a style that would have read strangely even between equals was not only injudicious in the highest degree, but indecorous, and did nothing but aggravate the evils which were beyond remedy But Sarah seems by now to have been almost beyond the reach of reason The thing was fast becoming an obsession with her, and her lost power over Anne and the figure of Mrs Masham began to take on an importance which threatened to dwarf all other

¹ N Tindal *Continuation of Rapin* 1725
² Appendix I, Letter C

issues. There had been a stormy interview with Anne from which tradition says both Queen and Duchess retired in tears, after which the Duchess again resolved "neither to speak nor write", and a stony silence succeeded the interchange of reproaches and arguments.

Anne had other things to grieve her just now as well as the breach with Mrs. Freeman. George's days were numbered. Bath, Epsom, Tunbridge Wells had all been tried in vain, and nothing now remained but to care for him as tenderly and nurse him as skilfully as possible until the end, and for this task Anne was admirably fitted.

Godolphin sent the news to Sarah at St. Albans. Here was an appeal as of old. Anne was in trouble. Anne would be needing her, for had Anne ever yet faced any trouble without her? She wrote a letter of sympathy, offering to go to the Queen at Kensington, but even in this letter she found it impossible to ignore what had passed and reminded the Queen in its opening phrase of her "usage of her" at their last meeting. But death would not stay even for the Duchess of Marlborough's complaints, and Godolphin's first letter was quickly followed by another saying that the Prince could not last many hours. There was no time to lose if she would be with Anne in her extremity, so she hurried into her coach and drove fast to Kensington, where, probably forgetting its beginning, she sent the letter in to the Queen, and without waiting for an answer walked through the hushed and waiting crowds in the antechambers, none daring to hinder her. All Anne's thoughts were with her husband who was dying as King William had died, his breath like William's coming ever shorter and shorter. At last it was over and when Anne in paroxysms of tears was leaning over the lifeless figure of kind, faithful George, it was Sarah who gently raised her and led her away into an adjoining room where kneeling down, with her arms round the Queen, no thoughts at that moment but of pity and tenderness, she whispered what she could of comfort. This was an Anne she could understand and deal with. This was the Mrs. Morley who had wept in her arms long ago. Let her but lean on Mrs. Freeman and trust in her. Mrs. Freeman would do all for the best. Anne must leave Kensington

CHAPTER XIV

GEORGE, after a long and undistinguished career, was dead, and it may perhaps be said of him that his death was the most important act he ever performed, for the Whigs in their anxiety to secure the appointment of Somers had threatened to attack him by name over the Admiralty abuses if their demands were not granted, and would doubtless have proceeded to do so if Anne had not yielded and George had not prevented them by dying. After his death—or just before it—Anne finally admitted Somers to the government, Pembroke took Admiral Churchill's place and Wharton, whom Anne specially hated as having advocated the invitation to Princess Sophia, replaced him as Viceroy of Ireland. The Whigs were now more firmly established than ever, but they made it quite clear that they would be satisfied with nothing less than complete domination. They now wanted Lords Halifax and Orford in office, and because they could not immediately compass this all their old importunities and suspicion of Marlborough and Godolphin returned. Sunderland and Halifax made themselves especially obnoxious to the Duchess, who they realised could do no more for them politically, and they even began to consider approaching Mrs. Masham as an ally. "The behaviour of Lord Sunderland," wrote Marlborough to the Duchess, who with Godolphin kept him almost daily posted in affairs at home, "looks like madness, for it is impossible for him to have a thought of being tolerably well with Mrs. Masham." Even Sarah was disgusted by the insatiable demands of the Whigs and angered by their attacks on her husband and the Treasurer. In the early summer of 1709 it seemed as if it might be possible soon to dispense with the unqualified support of the Whigs, for Louis, his armies defeated and his country exhausted and

mutinous, was trying to negotiate for a peace. There followed the usual painful spectacle of all the victors who had so disinterestedly entered the war scrambling and intriguing for the spoils. Marlborough, although he quite genuinely desired peace and laboured to moderate the greedy demands more especially of Holland, felt that after another decisive victory it might be easier to dictate peace than to negotiate it, though on May 15th he wrote to Godolphin, "M. de Torcy¹ has offered so much that I have no doubt it will end in a good peace." To the Duchess he wrote constantly with a heart full of joy at the near prospect of coming back to end his days "in quiet" with her and his children. But when the articles were finally drawn up with the approval of all the allies, they not only embodied the usual demands for spoil—or reparations as they may have called it—but contained a clause that no nation with any remnant of pride or courage could possibly have accepted. Louis, *le Roi Soleil*, the most splendid figure in Europe, was required not merely to cede the whole of the Spanish dominions to the House of Austria, but if necessary to expel King Philip his grandson from Spain by force of arms, and that within two months. Unless Philip were expelled by that time, the war was to go on—all French strongholds on the Dutch frontier having meanwhile been ceded and Dunkirk demolished! As might have been expected, he refused the preposterous and insulting clauses. "If I must make war," he said, "it is better to fight my enemies than my children". He circulated his own offers and the terms of his enemies far and wide, and exhausted, desperate as they were, the French rallied, as a nation will when pressed beyond endurance, sacrificed everything, and flocked to Louis' standards in their thousands. Marlborough, much as he longed for peace, said that if he were the King of France he would venture the loss of his country rather than join his troops for the forcing of his grandson. This is exactly what Louis did. The war was to go on. The Whigs were safe.

But the country on the whole was tired of the war. The first enthusiasm of 1702 had had seven years to wane and little now remained but weariness at continual bloodshed

¹ French Secretary of State.

and sacrifice, and resentment against the inevitable privations and the incessant drainage of both men and treasure—for what? It seemed as if all this misery were to go on simply in order to force upon the Spanish people an Austrian King for whom they had no special desire, and unseat a King who apparently suited them quite well and showed, no special signs of becoming subservient to France. Louis had offered everything England really needed—recognition of the Protestant succession, banishment of the Pretender, trade concessions, the Dutch barrier, the demolition of the fortress of Dunkirk. Why in Heaven's name could peace not be made? The resentment of the country, not quite justly, began to be focused on Marlborough, who was accused of prolonging the war for his own interests, an accusation sedulously fostered by the Tories.

The position of the Duchess began to be both unpleasant and precarious, and she was not the kind of woman to be able to improve it by tact or judgment. She had already spoken of retiring from Court—though that may have been the splenetic mood of the moment—and as early as August 1708 she had determined to build herself a house in town. It was less desirable now than it had been at Anne's accession to have no London headquarters, and her official apartments at St. James', which were in distasteful proximity to the Queen and Abigail, would cease to be hers if she retired. So, with a strange lack of delicacy, contrasting oddly with her previous acceptances of Mrs. Morley's munificence, she made Godolphin remind the Queen of an old promise of land near St. James'. Anne was only too glad to be able to do something which might placate the Duchess. A part of the Royal ground adjoining St. James' and Spring Garden, on which stood the remains of an old Convent called the Friary, was granted to her in August 1708 for fifty years on payment of £2,000.¹ Here she proposed to build her house, and Wren should be its architect. She had never really approved of the choice of Vanbrugh for Blenheim. The building was not begun until the following year, when in May 1709 the foundation stone was laid by the Duchess herself. The hopes of those

¹ A. Beaven. *Marlborough House and its Occupants.*

months were at first commemorated on it, for it was inscribed *Anno Pacifico*, but we are told¹ that when neither the Latin nor the statement was found to be accurate the stone was removed and another substituted with the simple inscription:

Laid by Her Grace the Duchess of Marlborough May ye 24, 1709.

Anxious for the completion of the house, the Duchess pressed on the building and seems to have managed to keep on fairly good terms with the architect who was at this time an old man of seventy-seven and for whom she had an affection as well as an admiration. White Dutch tiles and Dutch bricks were sent from Holland, mirrors from Rotterdam, and hangings from Amsterdam, and the serenely elegant façade began to take shape, its beautiful proportions then unspoiled by the third storey added by the great-grandson who later inherited it. Even in the comparatively innocuous business of building a house to suit herself, Sarah seemed unable to steer clear of enmities. In laying the foundations she had uprooted a young oak-tree said to have been planted by Charles II from an acorn taken from his preserver at Boscobel. Sarah had no use for such sentimentalities over the Stuarts. So the oak came up, and the Tories and Jacobites expressed their detestation of such sacrilege in various lampoons of which we select one—mainly to show the violence of the political and sometimes personal feeling against the Duchess at this time.

THE SEASONABLE CAUTION

“ Be cautious, madam, how you thus provoke
 This sturdy plant, the second royal oak,
 For should you fell it or remove it hence
 When dead it may revenge the vile offence
 And build a scaffold in another place
 That may e'er long prove fatal to your grace
 May furnish out a useful gallows too
 Sufficient for your friends, though not for you.”

The battle of Malplaquet in September did very little to improve the situation either at home or abroad. The slaughter on both sides was terrible, and although it remained true

¹ A. Cunningham. *op. cit.*

that France could not stand another such battle, it seemed equally certain that neither could the titular victors. Out of this also the Tories made capital, representing the war as an endless sacrifice to one man's ambition. But Marlborough's note to the Duchess breathes nothing but weariness. "I am so tired that I have but strength enough to tell you that we have had this day a very bloody battle; the first part of the day we beat their foot and afterwards their horse. God Almighty be praised it is now in our power to have what peace we please, and I may be pretty well assured that this is the last battle I shall be in; so I shall end my days in some quietness and have the satisfaction of your company." The Queen could not refuse the usual thanksgiving, but although the crowds who saw no more of war than drums and flags and martial music might shout their acclamations, and the politicians at home talk of marching to the gates of Paris, many whose imagination went further or whose homes were in mourning cried out afresh upon its prolongation.

The Queen had sent no message of congratulation to the Duchess. Personal relations between them had by now been restricted almost entirely to quarrels which, as the causes grew more trivial, became more violent in character. For this, although the Queen displayed great tactlessness and unnecessarily provoked the Duchess by allowing Abigail to usurp trifling functions which were in the province of the former, the Duchess was chiefly to blame by allowing herself constantly to create storms about matters unimportant enough to be ignored with dignity. Such were the disputes about Sarah's apartments at Kensington. In November 1709 she wrote to a friend, the Honble. Mrs. Coke¹: "I give myself the pleasure of writing to you and assuring you that I shall be very glad if you will make use of anything and everything that is called mine at Kensington". (Sarah used the apartments but seldom, preferring to return at night to her family.) Now it was found that in her absence Abigail had quietly annexed them—an impertinence that the Queen attempted to screen by lying. Various minor appointments the Duchess had been accustomed to fill were filled by the Queen at the

¹ H.M.C. Cowper MSS.

instigation and in favour of the nominees of Abigail; salaries were altered and favours granted in the same way.¹ And over every successive disputed detail there were stormy scenes and long letters, and the nerves of both Sarah and Anne must have been frayed to breaking-point. It may all read very childishly now, but nobody could be expected to enjoy having the details of their department tampered with by a rival and a treacherous one at that, though under the circumstances the wisest course would undoubtedly have been either formal resignation or silence. The first was repugnant to Sarah's pride and would, moreover, have created a difficult situation for Marlborough at a time when he was not free to deal with it; the second was equally repugnant to her temperament.

Her conduct until now, it may be remarked, although completely lacking in wisdom or finesse, does not seem to have been characterised by any special violence, as one would be led to suppose by those biographers who have sometimes allowed their sense of the dramatic to colour their view of the facts. Her treatment of Abigail Hill, as far as one may judge, seems to have been no more than the latter's undoubted treachery and ingratitude warranted; her letters to her were certainly dignified and restrained. Though some of the earlier interviews with Anne were undoubtedly stormy, Mrs. Freeman's worst excesses would seem after that to have been with her pen. But her nervous system and mental balance had undoubtedly received a severe shock; she was not the kind of woman to find it easy to recover from what must have been the continual strain and excitement of many months, and she had by now allowed the thought of Mrs. Masham so to possess her that neither self-control nor any sense of proportion was any longer possible. Nor was she helped by the constant flattery and injudicious sympathy of those who—whether in friendship or for purely selfish motives—filled her ears with further abuse of Mrs. Masham and encouraged her to make a further stand for "rights" which would have been far better foregone. Marlborough alone, judging from

¹ These disputes are all described with the greatest detail and prejudice by Miss Strickland who relied for her information solely on hostile sources, such as Swift and Dartmouth.

the available letters to her at this time, seems to have had the wisdom to see the harmfulness and futility of what she was doing "It has always been my observation in disputes," he wrote in August 1709, "especially in that of kindness and friendship, that all reproaches, though ever so reasonable do serve to no other end but the making the breach wider," and he advised her to write no more to the Queen—a counsel she would have done well to take Instead, she prevailed upon him to write to the Queen himself on her behalf, a task he undertook most unwillingly The Queen's reply sufficiently shows her feelings "I do not love complaining," she says, "but it is impossible to help saying on this occasion that I believe nobody was ever used by a friend as I have been by her ever since I came to the Crown I desire nothing but that she will leave off teasing and tormenting me and behave herself with the decency she ought both to her friend and Queen, and thus I hope you will make her do " In a letter to the Duchess herself, dated October 20th, 1709, she was even more explicit, saying, "It is impossible for you to recover my former kindness, but I shall behave myself to you as the Duke of Marlborough's wife and as my Groom of the Stole "

Even the Duchess' position as the Duke of Marlborough's wife was not, this winter, to hold much in the way of friendliness or respect, for the Queen had begun to show open hostility to Marlborough, and had in fact definitely and quite inexcusably insulted him She had, after some trickery, refused to bestow the Lieutenancy of the Tower, which was a military appointment, according to his recommendation, and she followed this by actually requesting him to bestow command of a vacant regiment upon Jack Hill, Abigail's brother, over the heads of several senior officers This was more than Marlborough could stand, and finding his personal representations useless, he retired abruptly to Windsor Lodge, and it was only when after urgent representations by Somers and Godolphin of the harm she was doing by thus undermining the military prestige and authority of her commander-in-chief that the Queen consented to withdraw her order and the Duke consented to return It is unnecessary to add that the Whigs were infuriated at this behaviour, and Sunderland, ever

to the forefront when anything undesirably violent was in the wind, actually proposed that Parliament should be asked to remove Mrs. Masham and her clique from about the person of the Queen. This preposterous scheme was opposed not only by the Duke, but also by the Duchess, but the story would doubtless gain in picturesqueness what it would lose in accuracy when reported to the Queen by malicious tongues. There were many of these, and they had been busy these two years. "There were also some," writes Cunningham¹, "who made it their business to invent calumnies against both the Duke and his lady. The Duchess of Marlborough, despairing perhaps of a reconciliation, seldom appeared at Court. This afforded great business to the female tribe who ran up and down the town from morning till night, that if they could pick up an unguarded expression of hers, they might report it to the Queen, with aggravations of their own forging, everyone of them striving to outvie the others in favour and collected all the gossiping tales they could . . . all which Mrs. Masham turned to the disgrace of the Duchess of Marlborough."

The trial of Dr. Sacheverell which took place in the March of 1710 gave the nation in general and the Tories in particular a chance to vent their dislike of the Whigs under colour of their old cry of "The Church in danger". It is a little difficult to-day either to understand or explain the amazing excitement provoked by the very inexpedient trial for high crimes and misdemeanours of this possibly well-meaning, but not very deep-thinking or strong-minded divine. It was scarcely his province to attack the Queen's ministers and a little late in the day to denounce the Revolution, while the doctrine of passive resistance and the divine right of kings, if logically accepted, would have had odd consequences to Anne's throne. Yet such was the matter of his sermon. Sacheverell himself, though something of an orator, was only partially fitted for his rôle as prophet and martyr, and was not even held in very high esteem by those who now set themselves to defend him for political purposes. The Queen herself, who was suspected (and with truth) of being his partisan, attended

¹ *op. cit.*

time the following day, but either by the advice of Harley and Masham, or because her own courage failed, cancelled the arrangement and told the Duchess to put what she had to say in writing—for Anne knew by experience that Sarah found things only too easy to put into writing! For obvious reasons however, the Duchess could not deal with this extremely personal and private matter in writing, so once again she pressed for an interview Anne, without Masham and face to face with Sarah, found her determination ebbing away and yielded once more But next morning, fortified again by her counsellors, she sent still another note with a further cancellation of the appointment and a repeated request to Sarah to put what she had to say into writing, when Anne doubtless would have the advantage of Mr Harley's assistance in framing an answer

Sarah determined to put an end to this shuffling She informed the Queen by letter that she was prepared to come every day until Her Majesty found it convenient to see her and followed this intimation in person to Kensington on April 6th in time to prevent the Queen from answering Anne realised that it was useless to oppose her, and after some delay—ascribed by the Duchess to the necessity of consulting her mentors—gave orders to admit her Grace who had been waiting in the long gallery at Kensington outside the Queen's private dining-room "like a Scotch lady with a petition", to use her own phrase Anne had evidently made up her mind as to her attitude She interrupted the Duchess at once by saying several times over "Whatever you have to say you may put it in writing" Sarah knew these parrot phrases of old, and undeterred by them went on to state her case, saying that she could not rest until she had cleared herself from the recent calumnies with which she had been loaded Anne did not want to enter into details, she was angry and embarrassed and would not even meet Sarah's eyes, turning away her face from the candle-light into shadow, and saying curtly, "Without doubt there are many lies told" Sarah pressed to know the specific charges of her accusers that she might clear herself "You desired no answer and shall have none," came the reply, another parrot phrase taken

from Sarah's own letter, and repeated again and again, as was Anne's habit, in answer to all Sarah's entreaties. "I am confident," said Sarah, "that your Majesty could not be so hard to me, if you could believe that it is only to do myself justice, and that I could convince you that I have no design of desiring any favour that you are averse to." The Queen felt she could stand no more and turned to leave the room. The Duchess followed her to the door pleading again and with increasing vehemence to be allowed to establish her innocence of these charges, and, as she saw the Queen meant to leave her, her self-control snapped and she burst into a flood of tears, which all her efforts could not check. Anne stood like a statue, unmoved and unrelenting, but not quite able to go away. As well as she could for sobs, Sarah passionately appealed to the Queen. Might she not, she said, have been happy in the Queen's favour if she could have contradicted or dissembled her real opinion of men and things? Had she ever, during their long friendship, told Anne one lie or played the hypocrite once? Had she offended in anything except in pressing upon her what she thought necessary for her service and security? She then went on to the main theme—that she had been accused of violating their privacy and explained¹ some things that she heard Anne had taken amiss. Carried away by her emotion, she was again choked by her passionate sobs, as she implored Anne to tell her what the further charges were. But Anne was turned to stone, and again came the cold insistent parrot phrase that must have driven Sarah, overwrought and hysterical, to frenzy, "You desired no answer and you shall have none". And to all her further arguments and pleadings there came nothing but that maddening, automatic "You desired no answer and you shall have none", until Sarah, at last realising that her emotion was hurling itself against a wall of adamant, finally exclaimed that Anne would surely suffer for her hardness. "That will be to myself," said Anne, and Sarah, exhausted and defeated, left the room and never saw Anne again. This was the parting that they had. For

¹ It may be noted that thirty-two years later Sarah carefully guards even the details of the accusations which here she repeated to the Queen.

love, as the poets said long ago, will not be constrained by "maisterie", and there is no bitterness so bitter, no insensibility so insensible as that which can be evoked by appeals to an emotion that no longer exists, no hatred so intense as that between erstwhile lovers. Marlborough knew this, but his wife did not.

She retired at once to Windsor Lodge to read Plato in an English translation, "take the fresh air and be easy as long as I can", and remained deaf to all entreaties from those Whigs, notably Lord Sunderland, who still thought that her sagacity and penetration, the unrivalled intimacy of her knowledge of political personalities and her influence over Godolphin might be of use to them. Once again Marlborough knew better, and in a letter to Godolphin he said of his wife: "I hope she will not be prevailed on to come to town; for in my opinion the intercourse of letters between the Queen and herself has no other end than making things worse"—which was one of the truest things he ever said.

Even after the final interview at Kensington the Duchess flew to her pen and wrote Anne a letter, enclosing two affectionate letters written to her long ago at the Cockpit—a proceeding which was not so much indelicate as stupid—and to these, with an indefensible breach of confidence, she added a letter to herself from the Duke of Somerset criticising the Queen. She followed this with another. These outpourings, in their railing tone, their vehement attacks on Mrs. Masham and the useless repetition of much that she had both said and written many times before, show only too clearly that the strain and excitement she had gone through had taken their toll of her and that on this particular subject, which had now become an *idée fixe* she could no longer be said to be normal. Normal persons would have perceived the futility of continuing to write in such a strain, even if they could have done it. But the Duchess' judgment and penetration which on everything else were as acute as ever were by now hopelessly warped and unbalanced on the subject of Mrs. Masham and her own loss of favour.

Things were going from bad to worse with the Whigs. The Duke of Shrewsbury—a political Mr. Facing-both-ways—

was made Lord Chamberlain in place of the Whig Earl of Kent, and by June it began to be said openly that the Queen had determined to rid herself of the man who was the most violent of his party, held nearly its highest office and was more personally obnoxious to her than all the others—Lord Sunderland. The whole force of the Whigs was mobilised to prevent this blow. The usual letters, drafted by Godolphin and the Duchess, were dispatched to the Queen from Marlborough, Godolphin interceded, Somers interceded; but to all representations Anne remained deaf. Finally in June, the Duchess herself wrote to the Queen, more as a forlorn hope it must have been than as anything else. The letter¹ (which was first submitted to Godolphin) was temperate and on the whole just, and confined itself to politics, but as might have been expected had no result and perhaps even hastened the blow, as the Duchess herself afterwards suggested. On June 13th Sunderland was dismissed and the seals given to Lord Dartmouth, a Tory known to be very favourably disposed to the Stuarts and an ardent High Churchman.

Funds dropped and public credit was affected by this change, but to a deputation from the Bank of England the Queen gave explicit assurances that she did not intend any further change. That may have been true in June, but by August she had resolved to take a further and still more momentous step and get rid of Godolphin, the most vulnerable of the triumvirate which had ruled her. Her method of doing so reflects the greatest discredit upon her, though it was doubtless dictated only by cowardice. On August 7 Godolphin had an audience with her in which he represented the difficulties occasioned by her loss of confidence in him, and specifically asked her, "Is it the will of your Majesty that I should go on?" To this direct question the Queen, with no apparent hesitation, answered "Yes". Yet that very evening she sat down and wrote him a letter of dismissal and had not even the courtesy to send it by the usual channels, but dispatched it to the *porter* at his house by a royal servant! So did Queen Anne dismiss one of England's greatest financiers, a man who had served her faithfully since her accession and

¹ See Appendix I, Letter D.

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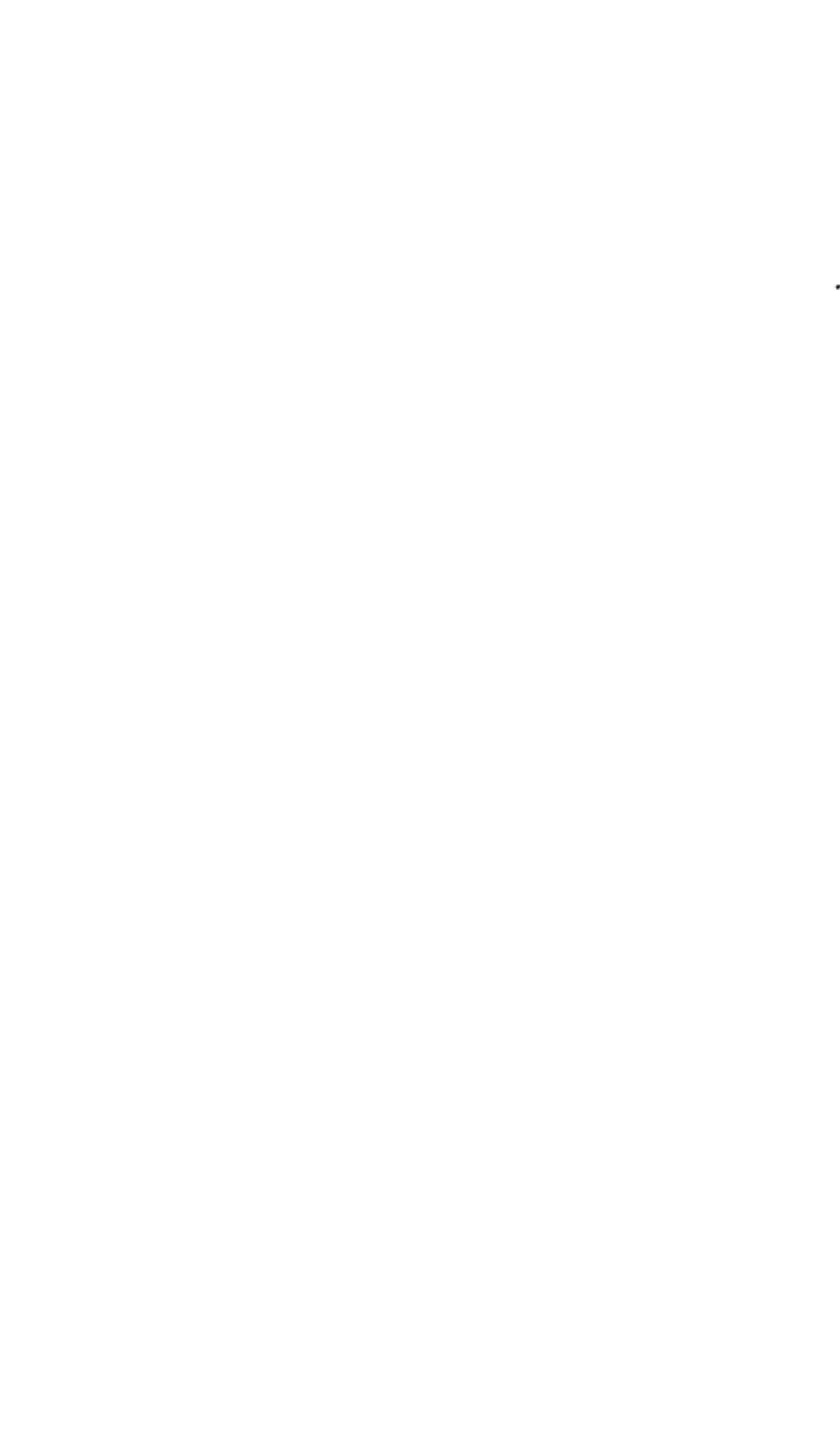
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SIDNEY, EARL GODOLPHIN

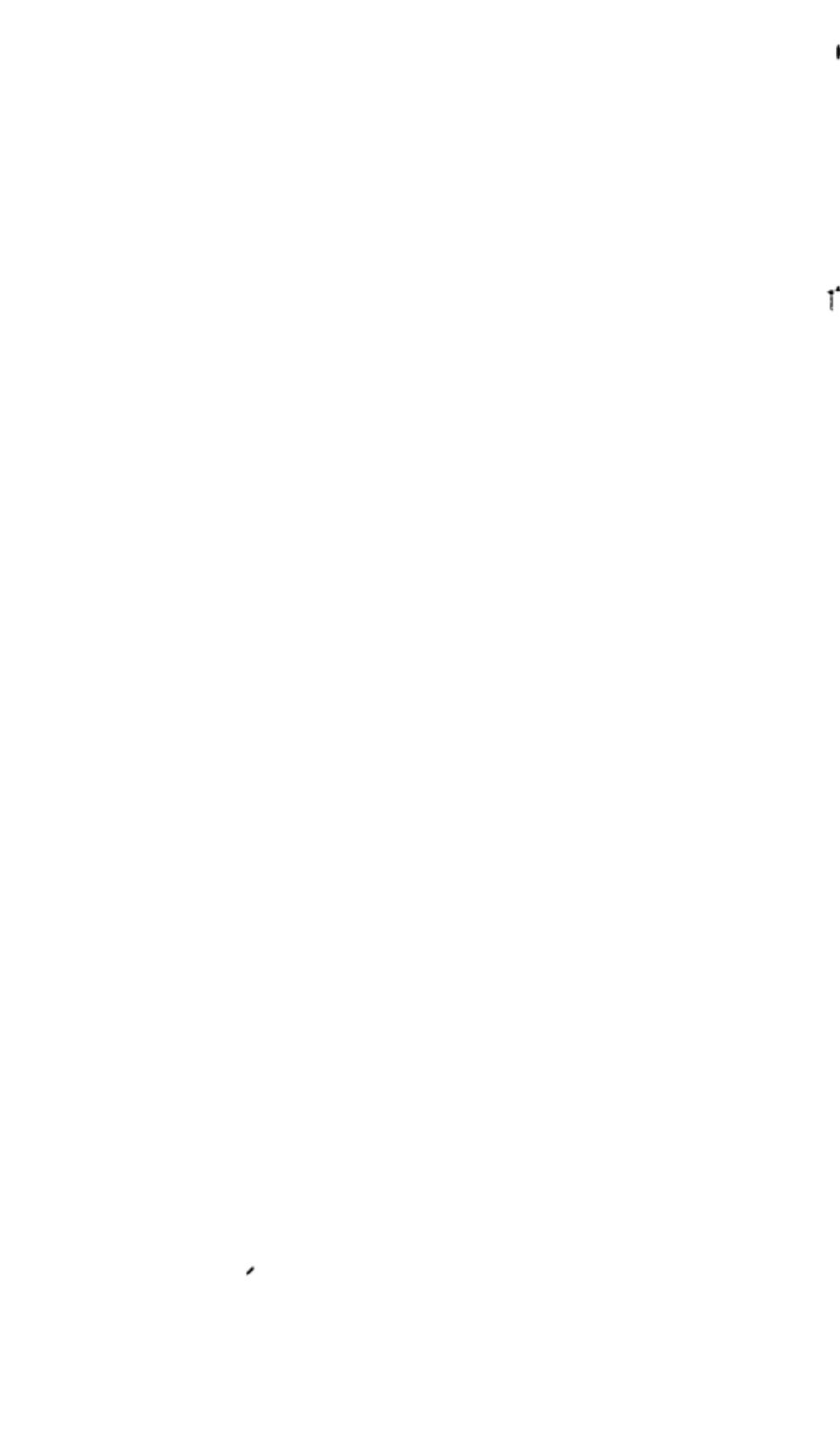
From a mezzotint in the Sutherland Collection, Bodleian Library, Oxford
Painted by SIR GODFREY KNELLER. Engraved by I. SMITH



PART III

1710-1744

THE DUCHESS OF MARLBOROUGH



CHAPTER XV

THE question was soon answered. At the dismissal of Godolphin, the Treasury had been put into commission with Earl Poulett at its head, and Harley returned triumphantly to power as Chancellor of the Exchequer. After an ineffectual attempt at coalition with some of the Whigs, he determined to establish the Tories. Somers, Wharton, Orford and the Secretary of State, Mr. Boyle, all resigned, their places being taken by Lord Rochester, the Dukes of Devonshire and Buckingham and Henry St. John. Finally, Lord Cowper also resigned, though both the Queen and Harley asked him to remain as Lord Chancellor. Unless we count Marlborough, not a single Whig remained in office at the end of 1710, except the Duke of Newcastle as Privy Seal and the Duke of Somerset as Master of the Horse—neither nobleman having played any very considerable political part in the late administration. One night in December 1710 a candle in an attic threw its fitful light upon a strange figure sitting up in bed scribbling a letter. This was Swift. He had been that day with statesmen and great lords, and now he was in bed to save coal, writing one of those amazing medleys of political news, gossip, intimate personal chatter and infantine endearments that Stella, far away in an Irish village, looked for so eagerly. And he was writing:—

“It was a thanksgiving day, and I was at court, where the Queen passed us by with all Tories about her; not one Whig . . . and I have seen her without one Tory”.¹ The *débâcle* had been complete. The intrigues of Harley and Mrs. Masham, the Duchess’ violence and perhaps the inevitable swing of the pendulum had put an end to one of the most distinguished ministries in the history of English politics.

¹ *Journal to Stella.*

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There remained two considerable figures—the Marlboroughs. The Duchess was still Groom of the Stole and Mistress of the Robes, and the Duke's prestige abroad as Commander in Chief was as yet but little impaired, whatever his position at home. France was still unconquered, and as long as there were English armies in the field it was unthinkable that anyone else should lead them but the general whom they idolised and who had led them to victories without parallel in the country's history. Neither would the allies, however much they might obstruct and oppose him, be likely to welcome any other commander but the one they knew and respected. The Tories at home found themselves in a very delicate position. Even their popularity would hardly survive the resignation of Marlborough until peace was in sight. Marlborough, though many had misjudged him, had made his position fairly clear the previous year, when he had asked to be made Captain-General for life. It was not a personal dictatorship he wanted, as his enemies declared. He wanted most of all to be at peace and in retirement with Sarah. But, until peace was finally concluded and England safe, he wanted to be left to lead his armies independent of political jealousies and intrigues. The request was ill-timed, open to serious misconstruction and could scarcely have been granted, for England has always—rightly—refused to risk domination by soldiers. It seemed therefore possible in 1710 that Marlborough would be willing to remain in command of the army if affairs at home did not press on him too hardly. The Whigs had persuaded him not to resign on the dismissal of Sunderland. The Tories now desired him not to resign with the rest of his former colleagues—for, except Godolphin and possibly Cowper, none of them had been his personal friends. It was this consideration and this alone that prevented the Queen and her Tory advisers from dismissing the Duchess—or rather induced them to postpone her dismissal, for no one could doubt that it was only a question of months, perhaps of weeks. Godolphin had written to Marlborough in July that "nothing will justify your not acting as you have done but some personal affront to Lady Marlborough which would be an indignity too particular for you to bear," and a letter from Mr. Craggs'

THE DUCHESS OF MARLBOROUGH

no more of it was spent". Her own account of how she dealt with them is of interest both by its fairness and its businesslike methods and attitude:—

"It is very well known that in the preceding reigns the tradesmen gave money to serve the Crown, which brought in great sums to the Masters of the Robes, but at the same time obliged the tradesmen to charge extravagant prices for their goods, a privilege that could hardly be disputed with them, considering the sums they had given for the custom and the accidents they were then always exposed to by the death of the Prince and the death or removal of the Master of the Robes. But the tradesmen I made use of had nothing of this to plead; they gave no money to serve the Crown, nor were put to any expense, not so much as the customary one of poundage; they were paid regularly, ran no manner of hazard and had no more trouble in serving the Queen than in serving a common customer and therefore I did not think it reasonable that they should be allowed above a shilling or two in the pound extraordinary for their goods. But those who had the honour to see the Queen and to make her clothes were allowed more than double of what they had from the first quality. And this was all I thought myself at liberty to do in an office in which I was so entirely trusted. . . .

"My method to prevent all mistakes and abuses was always to sign the tradesmen's bills at the same time that they delivered their goods. They were paid by Mrs. Thomas, a person of whose honesty I had had long experience . . . and I had a promise from her never to take money of any of the tradesmen. It is very certain that she was punctual to this promise." A footnote to this, adds the names and addresses of the principal tradesmen! The Duchess was certainly nothing if not detailed and thorough!

The Privy Purse accounts were subjected to the same calumny, to which the Duchess answered that she possessed receipts in the Queen's own hand for every sum disbursed, and that every statement of accounts was presented to the Queen and signed by her, "I have examined these accounts and am satisfied they are right: Anne R." As the last of these accounts so signed was examined by Harley himself, it says

term. In this effusion, infamous and unprintable charges were made against the Duchess and her family. Amongst other things she is accused of having carried on an intrigue with Godolphin, with the connivance of her husband! The Tory periodical *The Examiner* conducted at this time very largely by Swift, was indefatigable in publishing attacks and very often libels upon both the Duke and the Duchess of Marlborough. The Duchess was publicly called "insolent woman", "the worst of her sex", "a fury" and "a plague" by St. John. These terms, if one was a Tory, might possibly have been sincerely used, and political fairness and temperance can be expected from very few newspapers; but from gross personalities, to which the Duchess was more or less accustomed, the *Examiner* went on to disseminate equally gross falsehoods as to her discharge of the official duties, "misrepresenting me" she says, "as no better than a pickpocket", saying that she had, as the Mistress of the Robes and Keeper of the Privy Purse, purloined no less than £20,000 a year! The Duchess sent this article to the Queen, who was just enough to remark "Everybody knows that cheating is not the Duchess of Marlborough's crime". Harley himself, although he countenanced the libellous article in 1710, had written to her in 1706 that a collection of all the accounts having been made for forty-six years "it will appear how much better (to a great value) your Grace has managed for the Crown". The Duchess, in fact, dispensed the large income entrusted to her officially not only with economy but with the greatest exactness, producing vouchers for every sum to the value of twenty shillings. Some accused her of charging the Crown in excess for what was bought, a charge she refuted easily by publishing her accounts¹ and comparing the sums disbursed with Queen Mary's totals which were considerably larger. So that, as she ironically remarks, "If I paid more it must have been out of my own pocket, an indiscretion of which nobody has suspected me". Others, again, accused her of parsimony and robbing the tradesmen. Of this she says²—"I believe it is quite new for one that had to do with public money to give reasons why

¹ Which could always be compared with the originals in the Exchequer Rolls.

² Coxe MSS.

THE DUCHESS OF MARLBOROUGH

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¹ Which could always be compared with the originals in the Exchequer Roll.

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THE DUCHESS OF MARLBOROUGH

no more of it was spent". Her own account of how she dealt with them is of interest both by its fairness and its businesslike methods and attitude:—

"It is very well known that in the preceding reigns the tradesmen gave money to serve the Crown, which brought in great sums to the Masters of the Robes, but at the same time obliged the tradesmen to charge extravagant prices for their goods, a privilege that could hardly be disputed with them, considering the sums they had given for the custom and the accidents they were then always exposed to by the death of the Prince and the death or removal of the Master of the Robes. But the tradesmen I made use of had nothing of this to plead; they gave no money to serve the Crown, nor were put to any expense, not so much as the customary one of poundage; they were paid regularly, ran no manner of hazard and had no more trouble in serving the Queen than in serving a common customer and therefore I did not think it reasonable that they should be allowed above a shilling or two in the pound extraordinary for their goods. But those who had the honour to see the Queen and to make her clothes were allowed more than double of what they had from the first quality. And this was all I thought myself at liberty to do in an office in which I was so entirely trusted. . . .

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little for his fairness or honesty that he did nothing to put a stop to these preposterous slanders which, as they impugned not only her honesty but her efficiency, seem to have inflamed the Duchess almost more than anything else It was there-

February 22: 1709

I have examined these accounts
I am satisfied they are right

—JMWK

MSS EGERTON 2678 AND 10

fore not only the imminent danger of dismissal (with its possible consequences to her husband) but the irritation of these malicious falsehoods, for the inspiration of which rightly or wrongly she blamed Harley, which induced the Duchess to contemplate the extreme step of publishing Mrs Morley's letters Sir David Hamilton, one of the Queen's physicians who still remained friendly to the Duchess, was employed as intermediary and to him she wrote letters, which Coxe says "would fill a volume"—presumably to exact the price of silence Hamilton, whose task was certainly no enviable one, had to induce first the Duchess and then the Queen to refrain from any immediate action and in this he was successful, but Anne, though frankly terrified at the idea of publication, was still determined to dismiss the Duchess at the first available opportunity, and the Duchess was prepared to go any lengths to protect herself and her husband This was the situation awaiting the Duke on his return just after Christmas 1711 He seems to have settled the letter question at once, for we hear nothing further of that project after his return But the incessant fatigue and worry to which he had been subjected for the last two or three years had told on him (he was now sixty-one) and his health began to suffer severely Only one thing and one person could Sarah Churchill put before herself—

England and her husband. We are told by Coxe¹ (who was not partial to her) that she "accordingly prevailed on him to take the earliest opportunity of ascertaining the designs of the Queen and urged him not to permit her interests to enter into competition with his own honour and the welfare of his country."

In the last hope of protecting her husband from the indignity and humiliation which threatened him on her behalf, she wrote her final letter to the Queen—a letter in which she shows that for his sake she is even willing to bow her proud head in submission and apology for the first (and it must be confessed) the last time. This last letter, so different from any other she had ever penned to Mrs. Morley, does her honour, for it must have been very hard to write, and it was written not for her own sake, but for another's.

"Though I never thought of troubling your Majesty in this manner again, yet the circumstances I see Lord Marlborough in and the apprehension I have that he cannot live six months, if there is not some end put to his sufferings on my account, makes it impossible for me to resist doing everything in my power to ease him; and if I am still so unlucky as not to make use of any expression in this letter that can move your Majesty, it is purely for want of understanding; for I really am very sorry that ever I did anything that was uneasy to your Majesty. I am ready to promise anything that you can think reasonable, and as I do not yet know but two things, in my whole life that ever I did were disagreeable to your Majesty, I do solemnly protest that as long as I have the honour to continue your servant I will never mention either of those subjects to you, or do any one thing that can give you the least disturbance or uneasiness. And these assurances I am desirous to give your Majesty under my hand; because I would not omit anything possible for me to do that might save my Lord Marlborough from the greatest mortification he is capable of, and avoid the greatest mischief in consequence of it, to your Majesty and my country. I am, with all submission and respect

¹ The letters or documents on which this statement is based are not quoted, so, while there can be no doubt of its veracity, it seems better to quote it direct from the source from whence it was directly obtained.

imaginable, your Majesty's most dutiful and most obedient subject and servant. S. Marlborough."

Armed with this, Marlborough waited on Anne. Her Majesty's designs were soon made clear to the Duke. She wanted the gold key of office back from her Groom of the Stole and that in three days. She took the letter from him and at first refused to read it. This was Anne's hour, and she took the fullest advantage of it. To all the pleadings of Marlborough, to all his entreaties that the blow might be deferred until he could, with safety to England and Europe, relinquish his command, she returned to her one demand—the gold key. As Queen, she was risking the stability of Europe should he cease to lead her armies and she was perhaps paving the way for a peace disadvantageous to her kingdom. As woman, she was wounding in his tenderest point the man to whom above all she owed the security of her Crown, who had spent much of his life in her service, and who, despite his political changes, had treated her often with affection and always with respect. All this went for nothing. Again there came the parrot phrase. Anne must have her gold key; only thus could she revenge herself on Marlborough's wife who had humiliated her and made her suffer. Nothing else mattered. And when the Duke, kneeling before her, reduced his entreaties for delay from a year to ten days, her only answer was, insultingly, to shorten the specified time from three days to two. At this Marlborough realised that there was no hope and he left her and went to tell his wife that he had failed. Sarah sent the Queen her key not two days later but that very evening. Anne might keep her niggardly and insulting two days. And so, with hardness and insult on one side and bitter pride on the other, the Queen and the Duchess severed even the last slender link of mere official service. Anne had found not one new favourite, but two for the vacant posts. Abigail, who by now had learnt how to benefit by it, was made Keeper of the Privy Purse, and Sarah was succeeded as Groom of the Stole by the Duchess of Somerset—the lady who long ago had given the Princess Anne a refuge at Sion House.

Marlborough was prevented from resigning by the entreaties of his friends and in spite of all determined to continue his task of leadership. The Duchess kept what remained of the Whig party together, for her political influence was still very great. Arabella Pulteney writes thus to Mr. John Molesworth¹ in 1710: "The Duchess of Marlborough does not go to Court. You know she is a great State intriguer. Upon the last election of the Governors of the Bank she appeared herself to bribe² the electors for the persons chosen who were most of them Whigs to her taste, but not knowing how it would go, the night before she was at the opera and had there a list brought her of the candidates' names; and those she disliked she scratched out and others nominated, and carried it by her management." Marlborough House had been finished that summer and provided a convenient London headquarters and rendezvous for political entertaining. Sarah loved entertaining and excelled at it, with her unconventional and unconstrained bearing and her passion for good talk. But she soon found that what had recently passed and roused political jealousies to such a height that everything she did was given the fullest blaze of publicity, and her every action open to distortion and misconstruction by her political enemies. On the night of the Queen's birthday (Feb. 4), when all Whig society had decided to stay away from the festivities at Court, there was to be a ball at Marlborough House, and Peter Wentworth writes: "'Twas talkt of as if the Duke of Marlborough intended to make a ball that night at his house but when he found how it was took as a sort of vying with the Court, he let it alone; but the Duchess of Marlborough did send to several ladies to invite them to a dancing a Friday night. I know some ladies she invited, but that morning, there was papers cryed about the street as representing it a design to set up for themselves, that there was several people that had made clothes for that day that had not for the birthday; so they put off their ball, but sent to all the ladies they had invited that there would be no dancing but that the Duchess would be at home and should be glad to see any of them that would come'".

¹ Portland MSS. H.M.C.

² This may of course be true, but Arabella was a violent Tory.

These details show very clearly how difficult and disagreeable the position of the Duchess had become, and it is little wonder that her anger and vindictiveness increased as she was endlessly involved in these political and social irritations and had further to watch her husband enduring all but open insults from the Tories both in his political and in his military capacities. She began in her turn to employ pamphleteers. Addison and Steele, though no match for Swift and St. John, had defended her and the Duke in the *Tatler* and *Spectator*. Even Cowper himself had, in the former, answered one more than usually violent attack on her by St. John. Her friend Arthur Maynwaring now employed on her behalf the lower type of political scribbler who could be instructed to produce attacks on Harley and Mrs. Masham as required. But these two could now afford to ignore political journalism. In May Mr. Robert Harley became Earl of Oxford and Mortimer, and Abigail heard herself, perhaps with incredulous ears, addressed as "my lady", for she was Baroness Masham.

In March Marlborough went to Holland and the Duchess left London for Holywell House, St. Albans, where she busied herself once more with entertaining, and, again to quote Peter Wentworth, that useful gossip—"kept open house". At St. Albans the bitterness of political strife had a chance to become a little moderated. Although on the subject of the Tories, Harley and Abigail, the Duchess still became at once hysterically violent, amongst her own friends and dependants she showed her old charm. In a letter to her after a visit, her husband's chaplain Dr. Hare, who, like several other friends, did not on occasion scruple to criticise her with frankness, says "being infinitely pleased to see the easy manner in which you lived with all about you and knew when to lay aside all state and ceremony". As the greater part of this letter is taken up with censures of her political vehemence the commendation has a value which could not be attached to a mere letter of flattery from a dependant.

All communication with the Queen was severed. Sarah's last transaction as Keeper of the Privy Purse had been one in the highest degree unworthy of her. She had claimed, in



ROBERT HARLEY, EARL OF OXFORD AND MORTIMER

From the portrait after SIR GODFREY KNELLER in the National Portrait Gallery

her accounts and for the nine preceding years, the pension of £2,000 which Anne offered her in 1702 and which she had then refused, enclosing with her claim Anne's letter of 1702 pressing her acceptance. This mean and undignified action we must believe to have been dictated partly by vindictiveness and partly by a love of money which had grown with wealth and with experience of the power it brings. The Duchess had, of course, lost a large income with her State appointments and by this method she may have felt she had to some extent recompensed herself at Anne's expense. But the whole transaction was so indelicate, so grasping and, one might almost say, so childish, that we can only take it as one more proof of how seriously her mental and spiritual outlook had been warped by what had happened. She had displayed a similar spirit at her exit from St. James' Palace when she had meticulously given orders for the removal of everything she had added to the apartments at her own expense—even to the brass locks on the doors. Needless to say, these proceedings were violently exaggerated by malicious gossip, the final version being that in a fit of rage she had deliberately gutted the rooms!

And so between entertaining and political polemics the summer passed on. Difficulties and disputes over the building of Blenheim also occupied much of the Duchess' time, and these will be dealt with in another place.

In the autumn Marlborough returned, having, though now hampered by a depleted army, performed perhaps his most brilliant, though not his most spectacular military achievement by crossing the Scheldt and passing the French lines at Bouchain by strategy alone and without the loss of a single man, thus gaining "such an advantage", wrote St. John to him, "as we should have been glad to purchase with the loss of several thousand lives". But the negotiations for peace which were being carried on behind his back by Harley and St. John now received a further impetus by the death of the Emperor Joseph of Austria, father of the Archduke Charles whom the Allies were trying to place upon the Spanish throne. It seemed that, should Charles succeed to Spain as well as Austria, the danger to Europe might be even greater than

that which was held to threaten it by a possible junction of the Spanish monarchy with the diminished and now vulnerable power of France. And so, when the Duke returned home in the winter of 1711, the ministers who had actually signed the preliminary articles of a separate peace with France had now no further use for him, though his recent successes had of course been of use to them in their negotiations. They therefore now bent their energies on finally getting rid of him. He had been excluded, perhaps wisely, from the negotiations for peace, but on his return home he found himself charged with peculation on a large scale with reference to certain commissions and perquisites which it had been customary and acknowledged for every Captain General to enjoy. Finally, his expenditure of the secret service money—the very nature of which precluded detailed statement—was challenged, without reference to the fact that the Duke's armies were acknowledged to be better served with secret information than any other. These charges, which were made public at the end of December 1711, were made a pretext for dismissing the Duke from all his posts. They had doubtless been framed for that purpose, since the statement that his dismissal was in order that "the matter might undergo an impartial investigation" could scarcely have been even intended to deceive anybody. Anne wrote the letter of dismissal with her own hand and for once, as the Duchess chronicles, Marlborough lost his self-control. He threw it into the fire. That was a pity, for it would have been interesting to see exactly how Anne got rid of the services of her most illustrious subject.

It is not our province to enter into details of the further persecutions of the Duke and the tortuous diplomacy of the preliminaries of peace with France, which occupied the following months. Of the charges of peculation it is enough to observe that the customs under which the Duke was said to have drawn the various commissions, were continued openly and unquestioned by his successor the Duke of Ormond. Finally, in July 1712, the English army formally seceded from the Allies and left Prince Eugene to carry on the war alone. The campaign was finally ended in October by the surrender to the French of Bouchain, the scene of Marlborough's last

and some say greatest triumph. England had concluded a separate peace and left her Allies to make what terms they could. The peace itself, which was finally signed in the following March, neither embodied the concessions of 1709 nor offered to England anything in the least commensurate with the supremacy she had won in the early and middle stages of the war. But it gave England her essentials in domestic security and trade advantages, and had Marlborough's sword been carried to the gates of Paris it seems doubtful if he could have won there anything for his country worth the price of more blood and suffering. The clandestine and deceitful methods of Oxford and St. John—now Viscount Bolingbroke—who tricked and lied to their generals and deserted their Allies can scarcely be commended. And it may further be said that at the Treaty of Utrecht, a Bourbon still sat on the throne of Spain. We can, however, say this much. They might have "carried the war into the enemy's territory", they might have "marched to the gates of Paris". But to continue a war for the sake of gain or "glory" or revenge after the enemy had sued for peace was at any rate not a crime of which they can be held guilty. So the Treaty of Utrecht was signed and a reign of peace set in for England, only to be ended when Robert Walpole yielded in 1739 to the clamour of a people who had perhaps forgotten the price of wars.

Before the treaty was signed, Marlborough had left England—an exile. The summer of 1712 had been an unhappy one for him and the Duchess, exposed as they had been to political attack and personal unpopularity. They had retired to Holywell House, where they gathered their friends about them and, as far as was possible, kept aloof from politics. We are told¹ that Marlborough's own tent was pitched in the grounds of Holywell House by the banks of the river Ver in the heat of the summer, and here he and the Duchess were visited by their friends and neighbours, for Lord Cowper lived near at Colegreen, and their daughter Elizabeth Duchess of Bridgewater at Gaddesden, while St. Albans was within easy reach of town. In September a great personal sorrow befell them in the death

¹ Wentworth Papers.

of Lord Godolphin. Since his dismissal from the Treasury Godolphin, who had left office to his eternal honour a poor man, had made his home with the Marlboroughs. He had been suffering for some years from a painful internal complaint. The Duchess had nursed him during these months with all possible care, and when the end came on September 15th she and her husband must indeed have grieved bitterly for the loss of this, their oldest and most faithful friend. To bear the pall of his friend as Knight of the Garter was perhaps the last public act of Marlborough. Godolphin, after lying in state in the Jerusalem Chamber, was buried in the Abbey in October, and Marlborough, weary of slander and persecution, left on November 25th as a private passenger in the packet-boat the *England* in which he had for so many years hoped at last to find "quiet". But bitter though this exile must have been, it had to redeem it the knowledge that, as soon as she could, his wife would share it. Once before the Duchess had offered to go to him. That was when he was supreme at home and powerful abroad. Now, when he was to land in Holland disgraced and an exile, she would go to him no less and would share his exile as she had shared his glory.

CHAPTER XVI

“**T**O Mr. Jennens,—Maaestricht, Feb. 12, 1712.¹

“I don’t doubt but you heard I got safe to Ostend in a few hours after I left you, and my chief reason of writing to you now is only to thank you for your good nature in coming to Dover with me. All the places one passes through in these parts have an air very different from London. The most considerable people I have seen have but just enough to live, and the ordinary people, I believe are half-starved; but they are all so good and so civil that I could not keep from wishing (if it were possible to separate the honest from the guilty) that they had the riches and the liberties that our wise countrymen have thrown away, or at best put in great danger, and that they were punished as they deserve to be, by an arbitrary peace and war as these poor people have been for fifty years; and though the generality of them I have seen are Roman Catholics, they fear the power of France so much that they drink to the Protestant succession, and the honours they have done me in all places upon the Duke of Marlborough’s account it not to be imagined, which is not disagreeable now because it cannot proceed from power, it shows he made a right use of it when he was general, and is a short way of letting you see what people must think abroad of this ministry and parliament. . . .

“I desire you to present my humble service to Mrs. Jennings and Mr. and Mrs. Guydott, and to believe that wherever the fate of Marl. and I am, you have two very faithful friends and humble servants.—S. MARLBOROUGH.”

It was thirty years since Mrs. Churchill had left England for Holland as maid-of-honour to the Duchess of York, and for nothing less than love of her husband would she have left it

¹ *Letters, 1875.*

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again, "preferring to live in a cottage in England rather than a palace abroad," as she said. But for him she had turned her back on her friends, her children and her country and at the age of fifty-two had gone into an exile of which neither she nor he could tell the duration. The Duchess had remained behind for a few months to settle her husband's affairs and her own before leaving England. There had been much ceremonious leave-taking. "The Duchess of Marlborough is leaving England to go to her Duke," write Swift to Stella on January 4th, "and makes presents of rings to several friends, they say, worth two hundred pounds apiece." There was much talk in the town over these rings. Lord Berkeley of Stratton tells us. "The Duchess of Marlborough hath given great presents at her taking leave of her friends, several fine diamond rings and other jewels of great value to Dr. Garth for one." Garth had attended Godolphin and Maynwaring and had always been a friend of the Duchess who admired his blunt honesty, his Whig principles and his wit. She had no love for physicians in general, as we shall see later, and would have heartily approved of Garth's remark that of his patients nine had such good constitutions that nothing would kill them, and the tenth such a bad one that nothing could save him!

Doubtless Sarah's political enemies breathed a sigh of relief when they knew she proposed to leave England. Of the Queen's speech at the opening of Parliament in January Swift wrote, "I said the speech should begin thus—In order to my quiet and that of my subjects, I have thought fit to send the Duchess of M. abroad after the Duke."¹ Swift, however, was far from approving the unremitting persecution the Duke had met with, and declared that he himself would have left him everything but power.

Very little had indeed been left the Duke. Even Blenheim itself had been used as a means to anger and humiliate him. The building had been continued under the supervision of the Duchess, more, she says, because her husband was so set on it than because she cared herself very much about it, and throughout 1709 and 1710 Marlborough was constantly writing about pictures, tapestries and mirrors he is acquiring

¹ *Journal to Stella.*

THE DUCHESS OF MARLBOROUGH

abroad for the adornment of his apartments and hers. The Duchess' disputes with Vanbrugh continued intermittently. In June, 1709, we find him justifying extra expense to her, for, like every other undertaking known, the actual cost was being found to exceed the estimate. Vanbrugh has many excellent reasons why should this be so, "but though the expense should something exceed my hopes," he says, "I am most fully assured that it will fall vastly short of the least of your fears." There was also at this time trouble about the destruction or preservation of the ruins of the old manor which stood in Woodstock Park, rich in historical association, the traditional site of Rosamund's Bower and the nursery of the Black Prince. Vanbrugh wished to preserve the ruins and adduced many reasons both aesthetic and sentimental for their preservation, appealing both to Godolphin and the Duke against the edict of the Duchess that they should be pulled down. Godolphin, however, though we can scarcely admit him to be a judge of aesthetics, supported the Duchess. Their destruction was ill-judged and a pity; but Sarah, like some that have followed her, had neither the education nor the temperament to enable her to appreciate at their right value the ancient monuments of time. She lived in the present and the future, and though tenacious of the ancient liberties of England, seeing that the hopes of the future rested on their preservation, was indifferent to the romantic and spiritual value which might attach itself to relics of our fathers and the old time before them. Vanbrugh had therefore to give way, which to his honour he did most unwillingly. In 1710 we find correspondence and disputes over smiths' work and carters' pay into the details of which it is not necessary to enter. This time it was Sarah's turn to give way, which she does characteristically—"For though you have vexed me extremely", she writes to Vanbrugh, "in forcing me to things against my inclination [one wonders if this is really true?] yet I shall always think myself obliged to you, and will always be endeavouring to be out of your debt, because I know that what I did not like as well as what I did approve of, you intended for the best; and though it is said in the world there is no perfection, you are not the only architect that thinks 'tis

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THE DUCHESS OF MARLBOROUGH

husband's renown and the towns and villages she passed through bore names familiar to her. They had been written at the head of so many letters and she had herself addressed so many letters thither. She was willing to be interested in all she saw. At Aix she says she passed her time "in visiting nunneries and churches where I have heard of such marvels and seen such ridiculous things as would appear to you incredible if I should set about to describe them". Her secular tendencies were very far from being modified by what she observed, and her antagonism to the Church of Rome increased. She writes: "'Tis so much beyond all that I ever saw or heard of in England of that religion which I am apt to think has made those atheists there are in the world, for 'tis impossible to see all the abuses of the priests without raising strange thoughts in one's mind, which one checks as soon as one can, and I think 'tis unnatural for any body to have so monstrous a notion as that there is no God if the priests (to get all the power and money themselves) did not act in the manner that they do in these parts, where they have three parts or four of all the land in the country, and yet they are not contented, but squeeze the poor deluded people to get more, who are really half starved by the vast number of holidays in which they cannot work and the money they must pay when they have it for the forgiveness of their sins. . . . In one church where I was lately there were twenty-seven jolly-faced priests that had nothing in the world to do but to say mass for the living and to take the dead souls the sooner out of purgatory by their prayers".¹

In April she and her husband went on to Frankfort and she renewed her acquaintance with Prince Eugene. "I am come just now," she writes to her friend Mr. Guydott, "from a window from which I saw a great many troops that were under the command of Prince Eugene. They paid all the respect as they went by the Duke of Marlborough as if he had been at his old post . . . to see so many brave men marching was a very fine sight, but it gave me melancholy reflections and made

¹ I have modernised the spelling and omitted the initial capitals but I have not attempted, even for the sake of clearness, to introduce any other punctuation than that of the original. In her private and familiar letters the Duchess always wrote in this characteristically headlong style.

me weep, but at the same time I was so much animated that I wished I had been a man that I might have ventured my life a thousand times in the glorious cause of liberty the loss of which will be seen and lamented too late for any remedy, and upon this occasion I must borrow a speech out of Cato¹ ‘*May some chosen curse, some hidden thunder from the shores of heaven, red with uncommon wrath, blast the men that use their gratitude to their country’s ruin*’—and to secure which bring in the Prince of Wales and the power of France, after turning out the father to preserve our liberties and religion”

The homage paid everywhere to her husband touched and delighted her. The Elector of Mayence and the Elector of Sonnes journeyed to Frankfort especially to see him. Of the former she writes “He made me a great many fine speeches which it would not be well in me to brag of, but I can’t help repeating part of his compliment to the Duke of Marlborough that he wished any Prince of the Empire might be severely punished if ever they forgot his merit . . . it would fill a book to give you an account of all the honours done him as we came to this place, and in all the towns as if he had been king of them, which in his case is very valuable because it shows ‘tis from their hearts” They stayed two months in Frankfort as private residents, though keeping by correspondence in close touch with political events at home and in Europe. The Duchess was, all her life, an indefatigable correspondent. Page after page she could pour out to her friends—news, comment, reflection, all just as it would have occurred to her in conversation. The letters preserved from this period are mostly addressed to her connections, and to Mr Jennings, a lawyer who had undertaken the management of her affairs in her absence, and many of them are taken up with business and financial affairs, showing the Duchess’ invariable and unusual clarity, precision and command of detail. The semi-retired almost leisured life she was now called upon to lead did not at first bore her. “I am not so uneasy as you think, upon account of time that is so heavy, as you imagine me, which you may the easier believe because I used

¹ Addison’s play had been performed in 1713. Mrs Jennings sent a copy to the Duchess, who admired it greatly.

to run from the Court and shut myself up in one of my country houses quite alone which makes me now remember Mr. Cowley [a quotation from Cowley's *Essay on Solitude* follows] . . . but though I have quoted what suited my part very well in that author, and that I love solitude more than ever, I would not have you think I don't wish earnestly to see my friends and to be in a clean sweet house and garden, though ever so small, for here there is nothing of that kind, and in the gardens though the hedges are green and pretty the sand that goes over one's shoes is so disagreeable that I love to walk in the roads and fields better, where the Duke of M. and I go constantly every day in the afternoon and stop the coach and go out wherever we see a place that looks hard and clean." She goes on to tell of politeness extended to them by those they meet in their walks, and adds: "This is only a little taste of the civility of people abroad and I could not help thinking that we might have walked in England as far as our feet would have carried us before anybody we had never seen before would light out of their coach to entertain us." Out of the whirlpool of politics, it is quite remarkable how the hysterical note is completely absent from all these letters, even when they deal, as they frequently do, with political affairs. She even writes "I hear, though I am at this distance that a thousand lies are set about of me, but it gives me no manner of disturbance. Nay, the *Examiner* when I happen to see it does not in the least afflict me, for I fancy whoever can take such papers would write them if they could and therefore he does not add to one's enemies and I was really pleased to see such a man who wrote the *Tale of a Tub* made a dean just after their pious recommendation."

The Treaty of Utrecht had been finally ratified in the summer of 1713, and from that time onwards the Duchess' letters from England contained accounts of increasingly public manœuvres in favour of the young Stuart prince. Anne, freed from Mrs. Freeman's domination, had become the centre of conflicts almost as intense and perhaps even more unpleasant than those that had troubled her before. Lady Masham and the Duchess of Somerset, as Keeper of the Privy Purse and Groom of the Stole respectively, contended for

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influence over her, the former an ardent Jacobite and the latter a Whig and a Hanoverian. And not only in the closet but in the council chambers were there personal animosities, for Lord Oxford and Viscount Bolingbroke from being master and disciple had become almost open enemies. Bolingbroke was supported by Abigail, not only on account of his Jacobitism, but because she had fallen out with her former ally, now Lord Treasurer, over little matters of pensions, emoluments and the like which she considered should fittingly be bestowed upon her and her relations. So poor Anne, who had perhaps looked forward to a little rest and peace when the turbulent and tireless Sarah finally departed to join her husband, now found herself once more the centre of equally contending and if possible more bitterly hostile factions. Her affection for Lady Masham was still strong, Bolingbroke, brilliant courtier as he was, fascinated her, and her feeling for her exiled brother became stronger as her health became increasingly bad and the hated question of the succession daily more momentous. The Duchess remarked, "I am sure there is nothing intended by any in the ministry, but bringing in the Prince of Wales"—and in this it seemed as if she were right. As long as affairs were thus in England, any return was out of the question, though the long absence from home was beginning to depress her. "Though one submits to many things with some sort of patience that can't be prevented, I can't help saying that living abroad makes one very indifferent whether one's life be long or short," and again: "I know one must die some time or other, and I really think the matter is not very great where it happens or when but if I could have my wish it should be in England in a *clean house* where I might converse with my children and friends whilst I am in the world".

In the autumn of 1713 they had left Frankfort for Antwerp, for "like sick people", she says, "I am glad of any change". In March 1714 she had the sorrow of losing her youngest daughter, Elizabeth Duchess of Bridgewater, whose beauty had been celebrated by Pope, and who now died like her brother of smallpox. Private sorrow and public concern make the letters more and more despondent in tone though she

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remarks that she has "learnt to be contented with any condition I can't reasonably endeavour to change". There was nothing in the news from England to give her any encouragement. Nearly all the positions of trust were in 1714 held by Jacobites, and the High Church party, having succeeded in passing the Occasional Conformity Bill at last, followed it in 1714 by the disgraceful Schism Act—a measure of severe and open persecution of Dissenters. Practically nothing but the refusal of the "Pretender" to abjure the Roman Catholic faith stood between him and his succession to the throne. Little wonder then that the Duchess wrote despondently and angrily. Recounting a conversation with a Roman Catholic Jacobite she had met, she says, "He looked upon the restoration of King James to be so well laid that it could not fail and persuaded me as a friend to try to bring the Duke of Marlborough early into it; to which I answered that having done so much for the cause of liberty and for the good of England, I had much rather have him suffer upon that account than change sides, for that would look as if what he did in the revolution was not for justice, as it really was, but to comply with the times . . . I still persisted that if one must hazard, it should be in the cause of liberty for if one was ruined for that one had the satisfaction of having performed the right part; and I was born with a great aversion to fools and tyrants and I believe whoever is the first is in great danger of being the last, which is not strange, for certainly those that have most understanding will have most good qualities and fools are most capable of flattery and of all manners of injustice, for want of sense hinder them from being sensible with the sufferings of anybody, and having no judgment to guide them, they follow their inclination for that is ever so wicked and foolish."

Finally, on July 27th 1714, Bolingbroke triumphed. Oxford was dismissed and Bolingbroke became Prime Minister.¹ There seemed little hope now for the Protestant succession. But fate once more loaded the dice against the Stuarts and death once more took a hand. The wrangles in the Council had lasted in the Queen's presence until two in the morning with utter disregard for her health or for her feelings. On the 29th of July the gout flew to her brain, and it was obvious that she was dying. The Jacobites were unprepared for such an emergency, but the Hanoverians and the Whigs acted with admirable promptitude and dispatch. Every measure was taken to insure the tranquillity of the country and the peaceable accession of the Elector of Hanover. Anne was mercifully past comprehension of what was happening. She lay in a coma, with occasional gleams of consciousness. Yet, even as her poor harassed mind came back to a moment's understanding, they came to her deathbed and told her to give the White Staff of Treasurer to the Duke of Shrewsbury. Anne obeyed—she had always obeyed someone. The Staff was placed in her hand and guided towards the Duke; she whispered to him to use it for the good of her people and slipped back into unconsciousness, and from that soon afterwards into peace.

By an oddly dramatic chance this was the news which greeted the Duke and Duchess of Marlborough when they landed at Dover on August 1st to the salute of guns and the shouting and acclamations of crowds. Hearing at the end of July that Anne could only be expected to live at best a week or two, they resolved to return home and, if possible, be in England when the succession was actually determined, though the Duchess was so anxious to be back in England that she declared herself "ready to submit to popery or anything that cannot be helped". However, she was not called upon to do anything so spectacular, and the entry into London was practically a triumphal progress, their coach being accompanied to Marlborough House by a company of grenadiers firing salutes in their honour. Marlborough had not been included in the Regency which was to administer

¹ The term was not actually then in use.



QUEEN ANNE

*From a mezzotint in the Sutherland Collection, Bodleian Library, Oxford
Painted by M. DAHL. Engraved by W. FAITHORNE*

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the country until the arrival of the new King. He may have been hurt and offended by this omission, but the Duchess was probably relieved for, she tells us, "I begged of the Duke of Marlborough upon my knees that he would never accept of any employment. I said everybody that liked the Revolution and the security of the land had a great esteem for him; that he had a greater fortune than he wanted, that a man who had had such a success with such an estate would be of more use to any court than they could be of to him; that I would live civilly with them if they were so to me but would never put it into the power of any king to use me ill"—all of which was in the highest degree judicious. Marlborough took her advice and retired to Holywell House. King George landed at Greenwich on September 18th and greeted the Duke with kindness. The government that followed contained many of the Duchess' old allies. Amongst others, Robert Walpole, Lord Cowper, Lord Wharton, Lord Halifax and the Duke of Devonshire, all held office, though Lord Sunderland was conveniently disposed of as Viceroy of Ireland. The Whigs had returned to power, and Oxford and Bolingbroke were both impeached for treasonable correspondence with the Pretender. Bolingbroke fled to France and openly took service with the Prince of Wales while Oxford was sent to the Tower. "The Duke of Marlborough's levée," we are told, "is as much crowded as ever", and on Sept. 28th the King himself supped with the Duke and Duchess at Marlborough House.¹

Sarah was once more in the old bustling world of affairs she loved so well. Her daughters held posts at Court, and she once more entertained her friends and was entertained by them, played basset, ombre and picquet for the high stakes she loved and talked indefatigably and endlessly "who loses and who wins, who's in, who's out." The position, it was true, had changed. She was no longer the dominating figure, no longer the power behind the throne, but in this she seems to have acquiesced readily enough. She had no particular ambition to dominate the Hanoverians even had such a thing been possible to her. As she had truly remarked

¹ Wentworth Papers.

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¹ Wentworth Papers.

to her husband, wealth and distinction now gave them all the power they had any use for, and with their enormous wealth secure, their friends in office and their political pasts, they were impregnable. So the Duchess, her exile over, thankful to be back in England in her "dear houses," now looked forward, with almost all her old zest, to amusement amongst all the multifarious activities, business, political, social, in which she loved to immerse herself.

CHAPTER XVII

A HANOVERIAN sat safely on the throne. "My dear Duke," he had said to Marlborough when he landed, "I hope your troubles are now all over." They were all over, in a sense, for neither the Duke nor the Duchess ever again wielded the direct political power which had before been theirs, though Marlborough, against the earnest wish of his wife, accepted the posts of Captain-General and Master of the Ordnance once more. Sarah once more found herself at Court, but not this time as "Queen Sarah". They were very polite to her. They gave posts to her daughters and sons-in-law. She played picquet with the Prince of Wales, whom she found charming, and she entertained the King to dinner. She and her husband were too powerful to offend. But George's ministers did not propose to risk another Triumvirate. George himself spoke no English, and was more or less bored with England, but was prepared to do his duty as constitutional monarch (no more Stuart despotism and government by favourites) provided he was allowed reasonable leisure for his amusements, for visits to Hanover and for the company of his excessively plain mistresses—one of the few tastes he appears to have had in common with Stuart James. In this remodelled court there was neither room nor scope for Sarah. Perhaps with disappointment, perhaps with relief, she busied herself increasingly with domestic and family affairs though wealth, prestige and position still gave her great political influence which the habits and interests of a lifetime made it impossible for her to forgo.

There was much to do when they got back—visits to pay and children and friends to see. Finally, when she reached St. Albans, the Duchess was "more tired than [at] any of

my travels", but would not part with Holywell House "for any that I have seen"

The year 1715 was to see Marlborough acting as Commander-in Chief for the last time, when under his directions the rebellion of the Jacobites, headed by the Pretender in person, was finally crushed with the Duke's customary dispatch and success at Preston at precisely the spot he had predicted. The same year brought a personal loss to the Duchess in the death of Bishop Burnet, her lifelong friend. She had read the "History" in manuscript (tradition says altering and suppressing various passages to suit her taste¹) and Burnet's blunt vigorous personality, his Whig principles, his sincerity and toleration had always pleased her, while his third wife was amongst her most intimate friends. She had been a constant visitor to St John's Court, Clerkenwell after his retirement. A Tory epitaph on the bishop¹ couples him indeed with the Churchills—

" If such a soul to heaven is stole
 And 'scaped old Satan's clutches,
 We may presume there will be room
 For Marlborough and his Duchess "

A more intimate grief was hers in the following year. Anne, Lady Sunderland, Sarah's second and best loved daughter, whose sweetness, unselfish devotion, unfailing tactfulness and deep but unobtrusive piety had won and kept the love of those two turbulent spirits, her husband and her mother, died in April after many years of ill health. Her relations with her mother had been happier than those of her sisters. A little like her father in disposition, she seems to have loved and understood the Duchess somewhat in his fashion. In a letter she left for her husband to be given him after her death, touching in its tenderness and unselfishness, she wrote, "As to the children, pray get my mother the Duchess of Marlborough to take care of the girls and if I leave any boys too little to go to school, for to be left to servants is very bad for children and a man can't take the care of little children that

¹ Sometimes attributed to Swift (who hated him) but surely not trenchant enough?

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a woman can. For the love she has for me and the duty I have ever showed her, I hope she will do it and be ever kind to you who was dearer to me than my life". Another influence that made for gentleness was thus removed from Sarah Churchill.

"Everybody concerned for Lady Sunderland," wrote Lady Cowper¹ on April 19th. "The Duchess of M. mightily afflicted." The answer the Duchess sent to the letter which Lord Sunderland forwarded to her on his wife's death shows her finer qualities.

"May 13, 1716.—I send you enclosed that most precious letter which you sent me yesterday by Mr. Charlton. You will easily believe it has made me drop a great many tears, and you may be very sure that to my life's end I shall observe very religiously all that my poor dear child desired. I was pleased to find that my own inclinations had led me to resolve upon doing everything that she mentions before I knew it was her request, except taking Lady Anne, which I did not offer, thinking that since you take Lady Frances² home, who is 18 years old, she would be better with you than me, as long as you live, with the servants that her dear mother had chose to put about her; and I found by Mr. Charlton this thought was the same that you had. But I will be of all the use that I can be to her, in every thing that she wants me; and if I should happen to live longer than you, though so much older, I will then take as much care of her as if she were my own child. I have resolved to take poor Lady Anne Egerton³ who, I believe, is very ill looked after. She went yesterday to Ashridge, but I will send for her to St. Albans, as soon as you will let me have dear Lady Dye⁴ and while the weather is hot, I will keep them two and Lady Harriot, with a little family of servants to look after them, and be there as much as I can; but the Duke of Marlborough will be running up and down to several places this summer, where one can't carry children;

¹ Diary.

² Lady Frances, his daughter by his first wife.

³ Daughter of Elizabeth, Duchess of Bridgewater.

⁴ Lady Diana Spencer, second daughter of Lord Sunderland.

and I don't think his health so good as to trust him by himself. I should be glad to talk to Mr. Fournaeux, to know what servants there is of my dear child's that you don't intend to keep, that if there is any of them that can be of use in this new addition to my family, I might take them for several reasons. I desire, when it is easy to you, that you will let me have some little trifle that my dear child used to wear in her pocket, or any other way; and I desire Fanchon will look for some little cup that she used to drink in. I had some of her hair not long since, that I asked her for; but Fanchon may give me a better lock at the full length."

The children went then to live with her, and the "Lady Dye" here mentioned repaid her grandmother's care with a sympathy and an affection all too rare in the life of the Duchess, while her brother Jack Spencer always remained her favourite grandson.

Amongst the many letters of condolence she received it is perhaps of interest to chronicle one, kindly and unconventionally phrased,¹ from Madame Kielmansegge, the Dutch mistress to George I.

But scarcely had the first violence of Sarah's grief had time to abate when on May 28th another blow fell, and her beloved husband suffered the first of those paralytic seizures which were to lead to his death. He recovered temporarily under the care of Dr. Garth, but from now onwards his health gave the Duchess constant anxiety. Her care and devotion need no further testimony than the codicil to Marlborough's will. "Whereas . . . my said wife has been very tender and careful of me, and had great trouble with me during my illness, and I intending for the consideration aforesaid and out of the tender affection great respect and gratitude which I have and bear to her . . . increase her said annuity £5,000 a year."

The Duchess had now, as was both usual and agreeable to her, a very great deal on her hands, for in addition to the care of her grandchildren, the nursing of the Duke and the

¹ Add MSS 34510.

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constant and obligatory social demands upon her, most of the burden of the financial and business administration connected with the houses, lands and great wealth of herself and her husband fell upon her. The letters¹ from now onwards are usually concerned with business details of houses and lands, and the Duchess seems to have kept in touch with the work of her various agents with that astonishing grasp both of minute detail and of business principles for which she was remarkable. The letters themselves are scarcely of sufficient intrinsic interest to transcribe in this connection. They are not all, however, devoted to business. It is characteristic of the Duchess that she should be a matchmaker, and she was now to have the disposal of granddaughters and grandsons. In 1716 we find Vanbrugh adding to his already varied activities that of negotiator of marriages—the high contracting parties being her Grace of Marlborough with a granddaughter Lady Hariotte Godolphin, and his Grace of Newcastle with a hand and heart to dispose of. The matter led, as was now increasingly frequent with the Duchess, to a quarrel. Vanbrugh, at various intervals during four years, had taken considerable pains to assure the Duke that beauty was only skin deep (Lady Hariotte was a Godolphin and not a Churchill in personal appearance), and that virtue, intelligence and good temper were more to be depended on than hair, eyes or complexion. When the matter seemed on the point of settlement, the Duchess suddenly concluded the negotiations through other channels, and Vanbrugh was confronted by a packet received by a Brigadier Richards from her Grace in which on twenty or thirty sides of paper she had drawn up charges against him.² The trouble was the old trouble—the building of Blenheim. The difficulties and disputes with the Treasury about money had come to a head in 1718 with a lawsuit against the Duke of Marlborough and Sir John Vanbrugh brought by two creditors whose claims for work done at Blenheim had been inadequately met by a grant issued by Parliament in 1714 for the settlement of arrears and debts

¹ Chiefly in the British Museum or transcribed in the H.M.C. volumes.

² The quarrels with Vanbrugh will be found treated in greater detail than is either possible or desirable in this place in the Nonesuch Press edition of Vanbrugh's Letters.

due on the building. The suit was contested, but judgment was given against the Duke who was held personally responsible for money paid out by Sir John Vanbrugh on the warrant of Lord Godolphin, a decision founded apparently more on legal than on reasonable or honourable grounds. It was, as the Duchess observes¹ to Lord Pengelly, "quite new to make any man pay for a building to compliment himself", and she goes on, "delays in this case would be terrible after what I have gone through with Sir John for fifteen years and what I must yet suffer in finishing Blenheim, in which I never had, nor never can have any pleasure. And after so many years of uneasiness in that building to bear the delays of the law for as long as I live and leave this suit as a legacy to my family is a melancholy thought". This letter was written in 1720, but the suit was to drag on and on, trailing its dreary way from the Court of Exchequer to the Court of Chancery and from there to the House of Lords. Marlborough himself was dead before it was settled whether or not he should himself pay for the palace which was to commemorate the gratitude of the nation for one of their most glorious victories. But the Duchess, as his executrix, fought every inch of the way not so much, one imagines, from avarice as from pride and anger. The nation had undertaken to pay for Blenheim as a tribute to her husband, and if it depended upon anything she could do, the nation should pay, to the last penny. So she fought over every cartload of stone, every bushel of lime, every yard of iron railing, every foot of wainscot, and when she was defeated in one court she carried the case to another. There exists, in the British Museum,² an amazing statement dictated by the Duchess for the use of her lawyer, Pengelly. It covers sixty-nine sheets of foolscap, and in it is enumerated every letter from the workmen, contractors and surveyors, every voucher, every discrepancy, every detail, all given with the most meticulous accuracy in an unending flow! Finally, it was decided "that the representatives of the Duke were to be responsible for such arrears as should be proved to be due on the suspension of the works".³ Although this settled part of

* Add MSS 38036

* Add MSS 38036

* Corr.

the matter, it led the way to renewed litigation to decide the amounts to be paid by the representatives. The quarrels with Vanbrugh which had raged with intermittent severity since 1705 had reached their height in 1718 when Vanbrugh, the Duchess thought, tried to make her husband responsible for the finance of Blenheim, for it was chiefly on his evidence that the first suit was decided against them. Before then the disputes had been for the most part over matters of detail; Sarah was convinced (and it afterwards appeared with justice) that there was much extravagance and some dishonesty going on, and that, in the eyes of contractors and others, the Government first and next the Duke of Marlborough were regarded as a kind of combination of fair game and the goose laying the golden eggs. The situation is not unfamiliar; and if she objected, rather more vigorously and rather more practically than many to being fleeced, her conduct may, without undue partiality, perhaps be held to have been actuated by motives not exclusively of parsimony and vindictiveness, though it was perhaps not quite innocent of either. She had always protested against the grandiloquence of the design and the lavishness of the expenditure, and we find her writing as follows to her friend, Mrs. Clayton, as early as 1715:

“As to the affair of the building, I will state it to you as short as I can: the public has and are to pay two hundred and sixty-five thousand pounds for it. The Duke of Marlborough has paid and owes above nine thousand pounds since 1712, and we have yet nothing like a habitation for it. Of this great sum, thirty-eight thousand was paid, with the increase of the debts after the Earl of Godolphin went out, before the building quite stopped; and for that sum of £38,000, it is literally true, that there is nothing done worth naming; and what I have taken out of the books does not amount to £2,000. Without any aggravation, there is a vast deal more to do than is done; the finishing that is done is but a trifle, and there is a great many thousand pounds wanting yet to complete what is called only the shell; besides all without doors, where there is nothing done, and is a chaos that turns one’s brains but to think of it; and it will cost an

immense sum to complete the causeway, and that ridiculous bridge, in which I counted 33 rooms. Four houses are to be at each corner of the bridge, but that which makes it so much prettier than London bridge is, that you may sit in six rooms and look out at a window into the high arch, while the coaches are driving over your head.

But notwithstanding all this, Sir John has given Lord Marlborough an estimate in which he tells him all is to be complete for fifty-four thousand three hundred and eighty-one pounds, and because I can't believe that such a sum will do all,¹ when thirty-eight thousand so lately did nothing, I am thought by him very troublesome and quite stupid."

By July 1719 the breach with Vanbrugh was complete. He writes to his friend Jacob Tonson, the publisher, "I took Blenheim on my way back not with any affection (for I am thoroughly wearied) but some curiosity, the Duchess of M having taken a run at it to finish it in earnest (tho' in no good or graceful manner) she has advanced so far that in less than a month it will be fit to receive the Duke who is at Windsor Lodge till it be ready for him. He is in point of health much as usual and not likely to grow better. She is likewise in point of vigour as she used to be and not likely to grow worse. In the following year, writing about one of the lawsuits, he says, 'I hear she is now quarrelling with Peter Walters, finding the suit with Strong the mason is like to go against her' . . . I wonder her family don't agree to lock her up'. The Duchess' anxiety to finish enough of Blenheim for her husband to live in was dictated by his failing health and because it had been, as she said, 'his passion to have it finished'. In 1716, after his seizure, and when Sir James Thornhill was engaged in painting the ceiling in the great hall, she had tried to press on the work for that purpose, though Vanbrugh reminded her that the kitchen quarters and the water-supply were still uncompleted, and tried to avail himself of her anxiety."

¹ The actual sum finally spent was £370,000.

² She had emp[lo]yed Walters in the New Hall marriage. This was a secret was desired in her favour.

extract payment for them from the Duke. Now, however, she had the pleasure of seeing her efforts successful enough for the Duke to be moved there, and, though in broken health, enjoy for a short year or two the "quiet" with her that he had wanted so long and written about from every battle-ground in Europe. We have a few glimpses of the family life there and note much card-playing, many visitors, much interest and pleasure in the education of the young grand-daughters and, on two occasions at least, private theatricals. *All for Love*, which the Duchess had seen at Queen Anne's court, was acted in the large bow-window room by the grandchildren and their friends. The Duchess, we are told, acted as strict censor over the more romantic and amorous passages—"in short, no offence to the company". *Tamerlane*, the history of another world-conqueror, was also performed by the same cast, and it is pleasant to know that Marlborough's last years, though in some ways clouded, were spent thus happily and peacefully in the palace of which he was so proud, with his grandchildren around him and with his Sarah kind and tender.

But Sarah would not have been Sarah if she had not taken sides in the only political storm available. The Hanoverian habit of quarrelling bitterly with the Heir-apparent had divided the English Court into parties for the King and for the Prince of Wales. In 1718 Sarah had thrown in her lot with the Prince, and from a letter in the Stuart papers we learn, "The Duchess of Marlborough having been without permission to see the Princess with some other ladies, his Majesty has taken it so ill that he has ordered the Lord Chamberlain to make it known to all the nobility that if they wish to be admitted at Court they must abstain from seeing the Princess". Reading this, the Duchess' thoughts must have gone back thirty years to the Princess Anne when Berkeley House was forbidden territory to those who cared for the favour of King William and Queen Mary. But royal prohibitions had as little effect on her now as then, and her friendly relations with the Prince and Princess apparently remained unchanged, if we may infer anything from her account of the gracious reception she met with on a visit in

July 1720¹ Writing to Mrs Clayton, she says, "I went to Richmond to pay my duty to their royal highnesses, where the Duke of Marlborough and I had such a reception as would fill more than this paper to repeat. All the attendants, from the lord chamberlain and ladies of the bedchamber, to the pages of the back-stairs were so civil, that I thought myself in a new world. There was very good music though her royal highness, I saw, thought I liked the noise of the box and dice, and contrived it so as to make me play on when she left us, in a very pretty manner. Mr Neville went with us, who is more extraordinary in singing than what he is so much commended for, that is, his skill in ombre, and that qualification pleases me without any expense. As I play ill, the other entertainment is very chargeable, but as I have nobody, or but few to take care of when I am dead, I will venture to play with him and my Lord Cardigan all the time I am at Woodstock, if I can keep them so long with me."

By 1721 she had identified herself with the Opposition, and her relations with the Court were strained. A preposterous story had been circulated to the effect that she favoured the Pretender. "An accusation," says the Duchess, "as absurd and incredible as it is wicked." She fastened the responsibility of this on Mr Secretary Craggs, with whom she had quarrelled some years before over a fancied slight to her husband. But at another time she affected to believe that the rumours were countenanced by her son-in-law Sunderland. He had deeply angered her by marrying again, she considered beneath him, and by settling his property on the lady, to the injury of his children who were being brought up by the Duke and Duchess.

History was once more repeating itself and, as on a former occasion many years before, she determined to attend a Drawing-Room and put her position to the test. The result was such as to determine her to face the charge in the open and this she did by procuring an interview with George himself through the agency of his mistress, the Duchess of

¹ - I then been patched up with the Duke² that the reception would not have been so exerted in our cause

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Kendal, whose dislike of Walpole may have furnished common ground. Sarah could speak no French and the King no English, so she had to content herself with a letter categorically repudiating the ridiculous charge. The King made a non-committal reply, and Sarah, angry and helpless, could do no more. She was now on bad terms not only with the Court but with the ministry of which Sunderland was one, and with its chief opponent, Sir Robert Walpole, for by now he too had become an enemy. She believed he had used her "with folly and insolence", and had played a double game with her over Mrs. Masham, though by her own showing she had been friendly with him as late as 1714. One very singular and very shrewd opinion she held, however, in common with him. In 1720 the South Sea Bubble madness was at its height, and the Duchess had obtained shares in it through the agency of Sunderland. But as early as August we find her writing to Mrs. Clayton,¹ "every mortal that has common sense or that knows anything of figures sees that 'tis not possible by all the arts and tricks upon earth long to carry £400,000,000 of paper credit with £15,000,000 of Specie. This makes me think that this project must burst in a little while and fall to nothing". She sold out in time, against the wishes of everybody, and is said to have realised £100,000 by her sagacity. The bursting of the Bubble ruined the Ministry, and Walpole, who alone had given warning, came into power in 1721 as First Lord of the Treasury—a position analogous to that of the present Prime Minister. The long reign of the first of the Great Commoners had begun. It was a pity the Duchess' judgment of him was so much clouded by personal antipathy. Even though his coarseness, his lack of dignity, and his political corruption must have offended her, the two shared a sound commonsense, a shrewdness, and a certain philosophic disillusionment which, joined as these qualities were to a real patriotism, might under other conditions have made their possessors allies instead of enemies. The Duchess' political activities can be deduced from scattered letters and references in manuscript collections. We find her in 1717 opposing Lord Grimston at St. Albans, and in 1720 directing the Mayor

¹ Coxe MSS.

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of St. Albans how to obtain votes at the election¹ for Mr. Clayton. In October she carries the election at Woodstock² which she had lost the previous February.

She busied herself as well in attending personally the hearing of the Vanbrugh lawsuit, which was now being tried at the House of Lords. Lady Lechmere, daughter of the Earl of Carlisle, with whom the Duchess corresponded on the matter at great length, accompanied her to the hearings and wrote to her father: "The Duchess of Marlborough is impatient to hear from you and has a great deal of troublesome business with this cause".

Thus the time was filled with political activities, litigation, social duties and domestic cares, broken by visits to Bath and Tunbridge Wells for the health of the beloved husband whose care was still the first and foremost concern. He had been growing more and more enfeebled and was now in his seventy-third year. And at Windsor at the dawn of a morning in June 1722, the end came to that perfect love story which had begun forty-six years before at the court of St. James'. The Duke had had another stroke at the beginning of the month, and they had been awaiting the end for some days. He had seen his children and grandchildren for the last time, and when it became clear that he had not many hours to live, and the last prayers had been said, the Duchess, who had never left him, watched alone beside his now unconscious figure and alone took her farewell of him. And so, with the first twitter of birds in the Forest outside on that summer morning, death came and parted those two who in life had loved each other so long, so deeply, and so well.

It was not possible for the Duchess to face her sorrow alone, as was her instinct and her custom. The lying-in-state and the funeral of her husband were national not private events, and the splendid and elaborate pageantry with which his remains were then publicly honoured were, we may be quite sure, superintended by her to their last detail, that nothing might be wanting to pay him respect. She proudly declared the offer of the Crown to bear the expense of the funeral and, though it was fitting that the last public journey of John,

¹ Egmont Diary

² Harley Papers

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Duke of Marlborough should be to Westminster Abbey, it was not there, where she would not be beside him, that she would lay him to rest, but at Blenheim. At last it was all over and she could take refuge at Windsor Lodge and be alone as she wished. Refusing a visit from her friend, Mrs. Jennings, she writes, "I own I have seen several of my acquaintances which, as it was ordered, I thought I could not well avoid, but I had been much more easy if I had seen nobody". A letter to her from Lord Coningsby, written in October, says: "It struck me to the heart to find you the best, the worthiest and wisest of women, with regard to your health and consequently your precious life, in the worst of ways".

Very soon, however, familiar affairs of business and quarrels called her from retirement. By the Duke's will she had been left £25,000 a year in addition to her own private personal property and income which were confirmed to her. Blenheim came to her by Act of Parliament, while Holywell House, Windsor Lodge, and Marlborough House were hers already. Her total income has been estimated at £40,000 a year, equal to-day to about £160,000.

There were, of course, disputes about the will, in spite of the fact that the Duchess had insisted on its being signed in public and in the presence of distinguished and responsible people, and had herself written an account of the proceedings for reference. The chief trouble seems to have been with Henrietta, her eldest daughter, who now succeeded to the title. She apparently did not consider herself sufficiently provided for, accused her mother of making her father's will, and stirred up her husband and brothers-in-law to support her. She had been for some years previously on very bad terms with the Duchess and, whatever provocation she may have had, undoubtedly behaved with great insolence to her mother. (She signed a letter to her, "Marlborough" a month after her father's death.) It is not therefore in the least unlikely that the Duke had on this account left her less than he had at one time intended. So, at any rate, the gossip ran. Henrietta seems to have been a vain, silly woman. She made herself both ridiculous and notorious with Congreve and apparently attempted to figure as a literary and artistic expert without

either the skill or the equipment. The quarrels with the Duchess were, it would seem, upon trivial as well as upon weighty matters. We have an account of one. Lady Godolphin had caused one of her servants to be put in prison for theft. The Duchess, hearing of it, enquired into the case and found it a hard one, for the young man's salary had not been paid and he had borrowed money entrusted to him to free himself from debts. The state of prisoners seems always to have specially affected her, and on this occasion she paid the debt of £100 and clothed him afresh. Her comments are worth quoting: "I never thought of taking this man [i.e. as a servant] and if I had," she wrote, "my daughter has shown me that ceremony is needless between her and me, since she has taken my servants that were put away for crimes they deserved to be hanged for. But that does not trouble me for I have several yet that are only good for nothing and I intend to provide for them the same way. I think the world is much inclined to find fault with me since this is imputed to me as a wrong thing. All I can say is that Cudworth is not the first person I have taken out of prison; and if my daughter had not put him in I should have done the same thing, and let the foolish and malicious part of the world say what they will, I do think this man was a great object of compassion and it is no injury to the great lady since the debt was what she desired". She goes on with a reference that can scarcely be to Congreve, but may be to Gay—"I cannot help observing at the same time that she has starts of giving a hundred guineas to a very low poet that will tell her she is what she must know she is not". The absurdities of much complimentary verse of the period could scarcely have been more trenchantly expressed. The breach with Henrietta was never healed, though the Duchess seems to have been on good terms with the latter's children. When the town was rent in twain between the rival claims of Handel and Bononcini we find Henrietta patronising the latter and receiving him into her home with a salary of £300 a year, while the Duchess supported Handel. There is, indeed, a tradition that he was a frequent visitor at Blenheim and used to play the organ to her at the little church at Woodstock.

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One of her chief concerns now was to perpetuate the memory of her husband, and we find her to the end of her life expressing this aim in various ways. A letter, dated September 8th, 1722, from Gilbert Knowles to the Duke of Montague¹ says: "The Duchess of Marlborough's great præmium has tempted me to write the Duke's epitaph," and early in the next year Colonel Richard Molesworth is proposing the History of the Duke of Marlborough as "the chief affair of my life."² But we hear no more of Knowles' epitaph or the Colonel's history. The Duchess was many years before she found any inscription that pleased her, and the history of her husband was not written in her lifetime. What she could do she did, and in the most splendid manner. Rysbrach himself was commissioned to execute the sculpture of the tomb. At the entrance to Blenheim Park the Duchess erected a beautiful and stately Corinthian archway bearing, in Latin and English, the following inscription:—

" This Gate was built the year after the death of the most illustrious John, Duke of Marlborough by order of Sarah, his most beloved wife, to whom he left the sole direction of the many things that remained unfinished of this fabric. The services of this great man to his country the Pillar will tell, which the Duchess has erected for a lasting monument of his glory and her affection for him. MDCCXXII."

The Pillar she set up in the Park, and placed a statue of Marlborough at the top of its 130 feet. The inscription round the base gave her much trouble. Nothing pleased her. As late as 1727 we find a letter³ to Lord Macclesfield consulting him about the wording of it, and in 1728 she writes to Lord Pengelly on the same subject.⁴ Speaking of an inscription she had placed under a bust of Marlborough by Rysbrach, she says: "I was told the Latin was very good. That I could not contradict, knowing nothing of it. And I thought that if my acquaintance judged it ill, though a scholar, that few or none of our nobles would find it out. But the English verses were so bad I could not endure them." One would much like to have seen those verses. In September, however, she has at

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last been satisfied. "I never can read it without being very much moved, which I take to be one sign it is good," she writes, and adds, "I have been a long time getting an inscription and could never compass anything I liked." It is said that Bolingbroke himself wrote it, but of this there is no proof, though we know that he never lost his admiration for the Duke and was finally reconciled to the Duchess. But the most telling and the most dignified expression of her husband's greatness originated with the Duchess herself. She ordered to be engraved on the other three sides of the pedestal the passages from the Acts of Parliament passed in the year after Blenheim, setting forth the Duke's services to the nation. It was a superb gesture, and yet she could not have done anything at once more simple and more impressive. She herself says, almost naïvely, "I like anything of that sort better than anything poetical," not realising the rightness of her own instinct.

Her preoccupation with the memory of her husband did not, however, deter at least two aspirants for her hand. We are told even later than 1723, by such an impartial witness as Lady Mary Wortley Montague, that she had kept much of her beauty. The dark blue eyes were still as bright and as expressive, her carriage was upright as ever, and even her hair had not lost its gold.

The first to try his fortune was Lord Coningsby, who seems always to have held her in special affection, writing to her frequently as his "dearest, dearest Lady Marlborough". He was, needless to say, an active Whig and had been trusted and esteemed by both Marlborough and Godolphin. He was now a widower. The letters he addressed to the Duchess were almost absurd in their extravagance, and could not have been very welcome, coming as they did but five months after the death of her husband. She seems to have disposed of his pretensions kindly but definitely, for after this year there are, according to Cox, no more letters from Lord Coningsby, though she had maintained a correspondence with him for many years previously. Scarcely had the first year of her widowhood passed than another suitor appeared. This was none other than the Duke of Somerset—"the proud Duke" —England's premier Protestant Duke, who boasted the blood

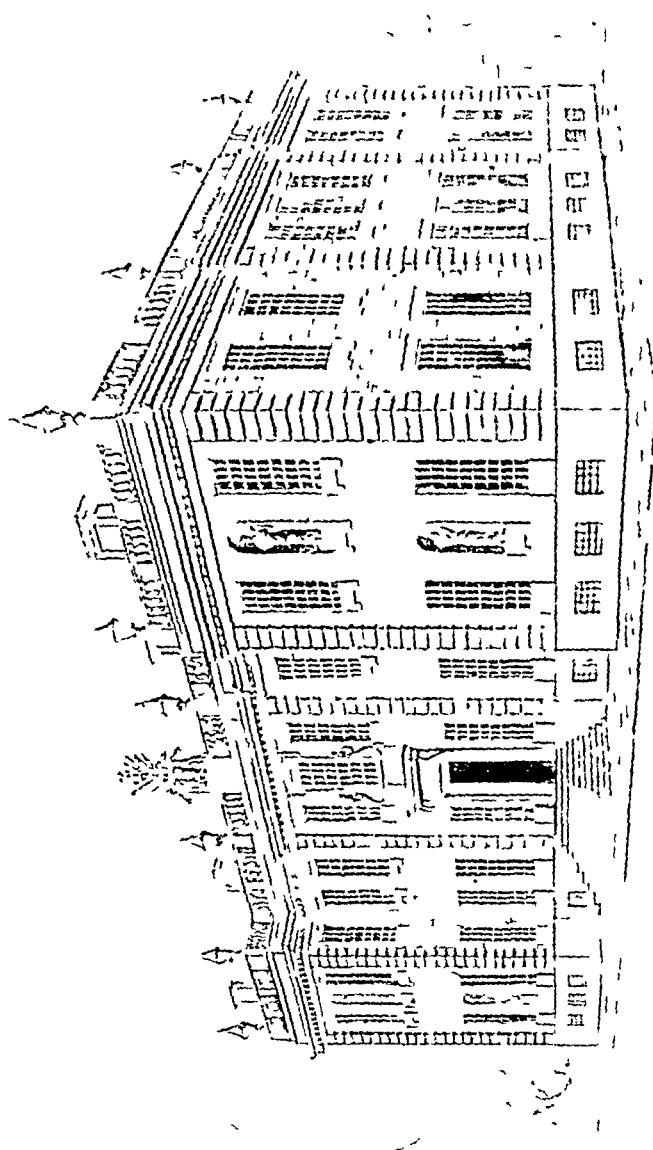
THE DUCHESS OF MARLBOROUGH

of the Tudors in his veins and who many years earlier had braved the displeasure of King William to give hospitality to the Princess Anne. It was his wife who had succeeded Sarah as Groom of the Stole and had done her best to counteract the Jacobite influence of Lady Masham. Somerset himself with whom, in spite of occasional clouds, the Duchess seems always to have remained on friendly terms, had been largely instrumental in securing the peaceful Hanoverian succession at Queen Anne's death. But the Duchess was unmoved even by the addresses of so exalted a suitor. She declined the proffered honour saying that thoughts of marriage were unsuitable at her age. For the discouragement, perhaps not only of this aspirant, but of any future ones, she told the Duke that were she only thirty, she would not permit even the emperor of the world to succeed in that heart which had been devoted to John, Duke of Marlborough. Somerset took her refusal in good part and remained on the same cordial terms with her, for only three months after his rejection we read in the Harley papers, from Oxford, that "The Duke of Somerset went yesterday with a great equipage through this place to wait on Her Grace of Marlborough at Blenheim", and we find him dining with her at Marlborough House some years later.

So the first year of widowhood passed and the Duchess settled down—if such an expression may be used of her—to a life which though busy, active, and full of interests and preoccupation, had but few real pleasures and was, above all, lonely..

CHAPTER XVIII

THE various disputes in which she was engaged continued to furnish the Duchess with entertainment and occupation, and she even found time to add to their number. In 1724 she acquired a fifth residence, this time at Wimbledon, which would be a country retreat and yet more easily accessible from London than either St. Albans or Windsor, both of which were a four hours' coach journey under the best conditions. Of Wimbledon Evelyn had written in 1662 that it was "a delicious place for prospect and thickets, but the soil cold and weeping clay". The house the Duchess now purchased was not the Elizabethan mansion that Evelyn saw, but one built considerably later by Sir Theodore Janssen. Janssen had been ruined in the South Sea Bubble. The buying of the house involved her in further disputes and litigation. The trustees of Sir Theodore, hearing that the Duchess proposed to bid for it, altered the conditions of sale from those printed in the *Gazette*. This was done a quarter-of-an-hour before her agent arrived,¹ with the object of extracting more money from her. She naturally protested against this sharp practice and attempted exploitation, and finally took the case to the courts where her contentions were upheld by Philip Yorke, then Attorney General. In this, as in several other cases, the Duchess' objection to being fleeced has, one feels, too often been ascribed to parsimony if not to avarice. "Though one squanders away much greater sums every day," she wrote on another occasion, "it is disagreeable to be so much imposed upon." She obtained possession of the house and of lands adjoining in Putney, Sheen, Mortlake and Roehampton, and amused herself by pulling down Janssen's building and erecting another. This she afterwards pulled down in its turn, not



MARLBOROUGH HOUSE

Drawn by F. G. HARVEY from prints in the British Museum



liking the aspect, and finally built one to her taste from designs by her friend Lord Burlington. But in 1736 her opinion of it agreed with Evelyn's, for she remarked that "though it stands high, it is upon clay, an ill sod, very damp and I believe an unhealthy place which I shall very seldom live in." Her directions about the building of the house, in a will made soon after this, are of interest as showing her personal tastes as exemplified in the design and workmanship of Marlborough House. "I earnestly recommend . . . that the same be done as at Marlborough House, in the plainest manner but with the best materials, the wainscot without any carvings or gilding. I will and desire that there be no foolish ornaments nor anything of that sort . . ."¹

The next business on her hands was litigation again, this time undertaken by her husband's executors against Mr. Guidott, who had managed the Duke's affairs while he was in Holland and who was now declared to have misappropriated certain sums of money. The case occupied the Duchess for the greater part of the year, and she was assisted in the enormous correspondence it entailed both by Lady Dye, who now often wrote letters for her, and, in July, by "my new secretary the Duke of Bedford, whose writing", she says to Mr. Jennings, "you will read with more ease than my ridiculous [sic] hand. He has come to town about his own business and he has turn'd Dye out of her place as my Secretary, which you know is a common thing in this age, for Ministers to trip up one another's heels". The affair apparently took up most of her time. One night she is up with counsel till one o'clock and several letters written before her secretary is up she gives her correspondents "the trouble of reading in my ugly hand". "I live in such a perpetual hurry of business and labour from morning to night, like a pack-horse," she writes, "and I think my head is sometimes a little turned." After a short rest at Blenheim, where the grounds were beginning to look "as beautiful as can be imagined", and where she filled the attic storey with friends, she returned to town in October and began to examine some of the witnesses. In November she writes to Lord Chesterfield, "I

¹ Spencer MSS.

am harassed to death, being risen every day for a great while by candlelight to take care that no witness should be neglected to be sent for", but finds time to order looking-glasses from Paris for some rooms at Blenheim.

The suit did nothing to improve her relations with her family. Not only was Henrietta estranged from her, but Mary also. She had married the Earl (now the Duke) of Montague, and Sarah not only disliked but despised this son-in-law. She said of him, some years afterwards, "All his talents lie in things only natural in boys of fifteen years old", and instanced his love of practical jokes. In 1724 we find her turning away a porter at Blenheim because he allowed the Duke to pass the outer gates. (The second porter "shut the door and swore his Grace should not enter for love nor money".) Montague appeared as a witness in the Guidott trial. He and the Duke of Bridgewater, in alliance with Henrietta, had both attempted to contest their father-in-law's will, but without success. Of Montague the Duchess recorded: "When I was at the Court of Chancery . . . a lawyer on the part of his Grace of Montague stood up and told the Chancellor that he knew nothing of the Duke of Marlborough's will, but confessed he had heard he was dead and believed it. It is easy to imagine how his Grace might happen to be of this belief, because he had been at his father-in-law's funeral". His Grace of Bridgewater would neither go to the funeral of his father-in-law, nor attend the opening of the will, though his daughter, Lady Anne Egerton, had been brought up by the Duchess since 1716. Mary's daughter, Isabella, was by now Duchess of Manchester, and a great favourite with her grandmother. It would be tedious to describe the progress and details of these various quarrels. Henrietta and Mary finally went their own way and held no communication with their mother, who in her old age got only from some of her grandchildren the companionship and affection she might have had from her children as well.

In 1727 she attended her fifth coronation, when George II ascended the throne. She was nearly seventy; the procession was long and tiring, and her Robes of State very heavy. They were of crimson velvet trimmed with green silk and edged with silver fringe. The cloak was of crimson velvet too, trimmed

with flames of green silk, lined with green silk and with six bands of ermine, and the train fell five feet on the ground. But the indomitable figure in crimson velvet, green silk and ermine marched on, and when the procession came at one point to a halt, calmly took a drum from a drummer and seated herself on it in full view of the crowd who laughed and cheered her.¹

The work at Blenheim was still going on. In 1728 the chapel was consecrated—even this causing a dispute over who was to do it²—the library built and a statue placed there of Queen Anne in her Coronation robes. The gardens were laid out by Capability Brown, the foremost landscape gardener of the time, and are said, even now, to be very beautiful. La Guerre was employed, as he had been at Marlborough House, to paint the walls with frescoes. The Duchess had for many years been a collector of pictures, and amongst the Coxe MSS. there is a long list of paintings bought by herself and her husband in England and Flanders, by Rubens, Van Dyck, Titian, and every painter of note. According to Hazlitt (in 1843), the collection at Blenheim Palace was almost unrivalled, and he also stated that the Duchess of Marlborough had collected the best available examples of Rubens, “and from the selection she has made, it appears that she understood the master’s genius well”. Some of the beautiful pictures at Althorp were also chosen and purchased by her. The Duke in his will had left her £10,000 a year for five years to complete Blenheim. Having finally got rid of Vanbrugh, she finished it at less expense and in a shorter time.

At the beginning of 1729 she had her first really serious illness—a severe attack of gout and rheumatism with various complications. In February Lady Irwin writes to her father, Lord Carlisle, “The Duchess of Marlborough is very ill and likely soon to make her heirs happy.” She recovered, slowly, and in April writes to Lord Pengelly, “I am much as I was. I have been extremely ill with the gravel but I thank God that is over. I have still the gout flying about and my limbs so weak that I can’t stand. They flatter me that I shall recover

¹ De Saussure. *A Foreign View of England.*

² Hearne’s Collections.

when the warm weather comes and perhaps I may to a tolerable degree of ease. But I know it can't last long and having very few pleasures in this world it is no strange thing that I should be contented to resign whenever the stroke comes." Like most people with excellent constitutions who have scarcely had a day's ill-health, she usually thought the end was near when she was ill. In June she was still ill enough to be writing directions about her funeral, which she said should "be only decent, and without plumes or escutcheons". In July however she had so far recovered as to go to Tunbridge Wells, where the waters did her some good, and by the autumn, except for occasional fits of the gout, she was "tolerably well" again. In September she had another bereavement to face. This was the death of Robert, Earl of Sunderland, Anne's eldest son, a much-loved grandson, whose education she had superintended since the death of his mother. He died in Paris, partly through illness and partly through the treatment of the physicians. The Duchess' account¹ of their methods is truly horrific—blisters, bleedings, purges succeed each other with relentless thoroughness and ignorance, treatments only to be compared with those at the death-bed of Charles II. No wonder she called them "murthuring physicians," "blockheads", and lamented that there was not time to send over a good English doctor. "I would have followed him to Paris myself," she says [no one doubts it!], "for it is not a difficult journey to have made, especially for one that loved him as tenderly as I did." On this subject we find her addressing a letter to Lady Mary Wortley Montague, who had become and was to remain a friend. "Your letter, dear Lady Mary," she writes on Sept. 25th 1729, "is so extremely kind upon the subject of dear Lord Sunderland that I cannot help thanking you and assuring you that I shall always return your goodness to me in the best manner I can. It is a cruel misfortune to lose so valuable a young man in all respects, though his successor² has all the virtues I could wish for. But still it is a heavy affliction to have one drop from the only branch that I can ever hope to receive any comfort from

¹ To the Earl of Nottingham. *Hutton Collection.*

² His brother Charles.

in my own family. Your concern for my health is very obliging, but as I have gone through so many misfortunes, some of which were very uncommon, 'tis plain that nothing will kill me but distempers or physicians. Pray do me the favour to present my humble service to Mr. Wortley and to your agreeable daughter, and believe me, as I am, very sincerely, dear madam, your most faithful and most humble servant, S. MARLBOROUGH."

The friendship between these two distinguished women is a matter of interest. Lady Mary was very much younger than the Duchess, but it is easy to understand their liking for one another. Lady Mary was a very brilliant and amusing woman, and Sarah adored wit and intelligence. Her originalities and eccentricities, far from shocking, would commend her to the Duchess, while her political opinions and dislike of Walpole would prove a further bond. Her entertainingly malicious accounts of political and social figures must have provided the Duchess with many an hour of amusement, and Lady Mary in her turn was clever enough to appreciate the quality of the Duchess' pungent shrewdness and edged comments on men and affairs.

The opinion about doctors which she expressed in her letters to Nottingham and Lady Mary was one which she held all her life. In 1716, writing of the illness of one of her grandchildren, she says, "I think her life is owing to her having had no doctors". Dr. Garth and Sir Hans Sloane she seems to have admired and trusted, but many other fashionable practitioners encountered her caustic tongue and vehement temper. When her grand-daughter, the Duchess of Manchester, was ill, she wrote to Mrs. Godolphin: "I cannot but think there is reason to hope she will do well if Dr. Mead does not kill her, for I know by woeful experience that he is the most obstinate and ignorant doctor that we have had a great while". Dr. Sloane was there and Dr. Garth was expected. "One doctor I think is better than a great many if you can rely on him; and as the practice is amongst them you have really but the advice of one when you call in twenty, for they all submit to that doctor that is most cried up, either for a quiet life or fear of not being sent for to his patients."

It is to be feared that, whatever the general truth of the passage, by "ignorant" the Duchess too often meant not agreeing with her, and by "obstinate" not doing what she told them. With Dr Mead she had had several violent disagreements when her husband was ill.

Political affairs still engaged much of her time and attention. At the accession of George II, Walpole, contrary to expectation and largely owing to the influence of Queen Caroline, had remained in power, and he devoted his energies to maintaining the Triple Alliance between England, France and Holland against the encroachments of Spain and her attempts to acquire the hegemony of Europe. The Duchess did not see either as widely or as far as he did, and moreover her whole life had been spent in violent antagonism to France, while her husband's genius had been devoted to the single object of breaking the power of that nation. That Walpole should lead his country into an alliance with the lifelong and detested enemy seemed to her to be a treachery to everything Marlborough had lived for, and Caroline's support of him added her to the list of the Duchess' enemies, in spite of the cordiality of their earlier relations. She ranged herself with Pulteney, Carteret and Chesterfield who headed the opposition to Walpole, and on this account may have now been reconciled to Bolingbroke who had joined himself to their party.¹ With this incentive, she left no stone unturned to oppose Walpole wherever possible. Several letters of this period (1729-1733) deal with election business at St Albans, Windsor and Woodstock, where the Duchess' position would make her influence almost paramount. In 1733 she writes to the Duke of Manchester refusing her recommendation for a certain member, saying that she would "oppose any man living who had voted not to look into the public accounts and several other things that the nation has a right to be satisfied in," and she had lent large sums to the government "thinking it would have had a good effect for the security of the nation." Although the Duchess was opposed to Walpole, the old principles of party had now changed, and she had by

¹ It is perhaps significant in this connection that there is only one reference to St John in the *Correspondence* and over twenty to Harley.

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no means become a Tory. In one of her letters to Mrs. Godolphin, she says that as a Whig she had objected both to Charles II and to James II, the first for selling his country to France and the second for religious oppression. "But as to what is called the Whig notion I will never part with; that Parliament should punish ill ministers and by that means oblige weak or bad princes to keep their coronation oaths." Walpole's system of buying as many votes as he required in the House of Commons would scarcely commend itself to one who thus upheld the power of Parliament. A letter to her from William Pulteney¹ will indicate the terms on which she was with the Opposition:—

"London, Nov. 24, 1734.

"Madam,

When I received the honour of your Grace's answer to my first letter, I owe I was extremely mortify'd at some of the expressions in it. Surely you cannot be in earnest in resolving to spend the remainder of your time in the country and see London no more, nor can your health be so bad but that you may have many happy years to come, and many opportunities of making others happy also; Your inclination to do good is I dare say as strong as ever it was and no one has done more than you have. Believe me, Madam, no one living is of more consequence than you are. You have friends, you have credit, you have talents, you have power and you have spirits still to do an infinite deal of service if you will please to exert them, and why you should lock yourself up I cannot conceive. A little bustling in the business of the world will give you a new flow of spirits and methinks if it be true that Sir Robert designs to attack you at Woodstock, that spur should animate you to bid him, and not only him but everybody else defiance, that dares to attack you there, or anywhere else; but from what I can learn from the Woodstock affair, and I have made it my business to enquire about it, all your enemies give out is nothing but a gasconade without the least hopes of success.

¹ *Mackintosh Papers.*

"I will show your Grace's second letter to Mr. Merrill that he may see how heartily you interest yourself in this affair,¹ and I am just going to Lord Winchelsea to desire him to do the same. If Doctor Snape should not die Sir Robert will be disappointed, if he should we must do our best to disappoint him.

"I am afraid in the retired way you now live that you would not care for company, else I should be glad of the honour of waiting on you a day, to talk you into the world again, to let you know how many friends and humble servants you have in it, and to assure you that among them all none is more sincerely or respectfully than

"I am

"Your Grace's

"Most obedt & faithful hble Servt

"WM. PULTENEY."

The usual quarrel between the King and the Heir Apparent was once more in full swing, and the Duchess ranged herself with the Prince against Walpole and the Queen. There is a story which, although it comes from one as biased and unreliable as Horace Walpole, is nevertheless quite possibly true. It was said that the Duchess had planned a match between her grand-daughter, Diana Spencer, and the Prince of Wales, and proposed to give Dye a dowry of £100,000. His Royal Highness was deeply in debt, Lady Dye was extremely charming, and the whole affair would have been triumphantly concluded at Windsor Lodge but for the intervention of Sir Robert, who discovered the scheme. Lady Dye's hand was afterwards sought by the elegant and distinguished Earl of Chesterfield, a great friend of the Duchess, but before his suit she had already been pledged to Lord John Russell, afterwards Duke of Bedford, whose Duchess she became.

The Duchess, as has been seen, in spite of her reputed parsimony, was quite capable of laying out enormous sums of money upon an object she considered desirable. Nor was this quality exercised only in her own interests. The story of

* The election to a fellowship at Cambridge.

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Child's Bank is a dramatic one. The notes of the Bank of England were at one time at a considerable discount while those of Child's Bank and Hoare's Bank (with both of which the Duchess had dealings) were at par. The Bank of England then hit on a not very creditable method of damaging the reputation of Child's Bank. They proposed to collect a very large quantity of their notes and pour them in all together for payment on the same day. The Duchess, however, got wind of the project. She sent immediately for Mr. Child, told him of the scheme, and handed him a piece of paper on which was written an order for £100,000 *on the Bank of England*. This not only enabled Child's Bank to meet all demands on it, but to meet them in Bank of England notes, a circumstance which occasioned considerable loss to that body. On another occasion she gave £1,000 to a scheme for settling poor families in Georgia. In 1736 a more personal and a larger charitable scheme was carried out. This was the erection of the almshouses standing to-day at St. Albans, with the cedar tree planted by the Duchess in the courtyard. From some manuscript notes preserved at Althorp we learn something of the founder's intentions. There were to be thirty-six places¹ and they were primarily designed for the help of any widows of soldiers in Marlborough's armies who might be in want. After them they were for decayed gentleman and gentlewomen or for putting out orphan children as apprentices. In the event of there being more applications of equal merit than vacancies, election was to be by lot. The other directions deal with the election and powers of administrative officers and with the finance of the institution. The cost of the building and endowment of this charity was about £50,000 and the deeds were signed at Marlborough House on June 7th, 1736.

The years were passing on, and as age went the Duchess was now an old woman. But nowhere do we find traces of any diminution of her vigour, vitality and keen interest in the world around her in which she still played a notable part. Elections were still held in which the word of the Duchess of Marlborough secured the return of the candidate. Sometimes her methods were highly original, as when in 1737,

¹ There are now twenty-four.

opposing the election of Lord Grimston at St. Albans, she collected the unsold copies of the first edition, and printed at her own expense a second, of *Lore in a Hollow Tree*, an extremely silly play his lordship had written at an earlier stage of his career. The electors of St. Albans apparently found the argument conclusive, for the noble dramatist was not returned. The method may in some ways be commended. At least it has the advantage of discouraging authors from going into Parliament, or alternatively of deterring members of Parliament from authorship.

Law suits over the Blenheim accounts form a perpetual *obbligato* to other disputes. Vanbrugh was not admitted now inside the gates. When he brought Lord and Lady Carlisle to Woodstock to see the building, he found orders given to refuse admission to himself and his wife. The Duchess explained her action in a letter to Lord Carlisle. "I should not do this upon the worthlessness of his character, nor for any abuses in the building, but in the life of the Duke of Marlborough he had the impudence to print a libel both of him and of me, for which his bones ought to be broken." Of other disputes there were still enough and to spare. There were difficulties first about taxes, then about rights of way, supplies of venison, or provision of hay in Windsor Park—of which the Duchess was still Ranger; anon it was the entrance to Marlborough House in Pall Mall where they had built houses which encroached eight feet on her passage way and "have built out several sheds and more cellars, which do not only make it narrower, but from their setting out benches and drays coming to carry things into the cellars it is sometimes difficult for chairs to pass". The Queen herself was not immune from trouble with her Grace. Caroline wished to make a road through some of the Duchess' property at Wimbledon and asked permission to do so. The Duchess refused because, she said, she had been told that the Queen had spoken against her husband in the Drawing-Room. When this had been settled and permission given, a further trouble arose over some legal rights the Queen wanted and which the Duchess refused. "Upon my honour," declared the Queen, "I will go to law with the Duchess of Marlborough, who I know loves law."

But Caroline discovered that she was dealing with one better versed in law than she was, and that she had no case. So she contented herself with confiscating the royal grant of £500 a year to the Ranger of Windsor Park—a proceeding which involved the officials of the Treasury in endless and argumentative correspondence with her Grace. Once again one feels that the Duchess' persistent agitation about a comparatively small sum was dictated rather by pride and anger than by greed. Until Sarah had it, Caroline might be said to be the victor.

These unending and varied disputes were of course a form of excitement and entertainment to the Duchess, and the conduct of them doubtless gave her a certain amount of pleasure. She had been accustomed to the exercise of power for so many years that it is not hard to understand how any form of activity that provided at least its semblance might be welcome. To fight and to win is after all the exercise of power, and the Duchess was very seldom worsted. It did not, perhaps, make for happiness, but it prevented ennui and required the exercise of a clear head and a determined and vigorous spirit.

The quarrels with members of her own family scarcely come into the same category. They were rather the outcome of both character and circumstance, and due to qualities now beyond her control. For the most part we have only the Duchess' side of them and that can scarcely be relied on. The truth probably was that she never realised—what is after all still imperfectly realised—that nothing could give her unquestionable rights over the lives of others. She expected her word to be law to her children and grandchildren, and was vehemently intolerant of any individuality outside her own, in cases where she held an imagined "right". It never occurred to her that, be her desires and plans as benevolent and as admirable as she knew them to be, to impose them on others in defiance of their wishes or opinions was a violation of that liberty and tolerance she advocated so passionately in other spheres. Apart from the fact that the customs of the age gave infinitely more power to those in authority than is now the case, the Duchess' position made inevitably for autocracy. With both wealth and rank at her back she was impregnable. As has

been pointed out before, she was and had been for most of her life immune from conditions under which the wishes and opinions of others must of necessity be studied. That is a dangerous position and there will be few who will hold it unscathed. The Duchess certainly was not one, and she had to pay the price of her attempted autocracy by forfeiting the love of many who, under different auspices, might have contributed much to the pleasure and happiness of her old age.

These last years were clouded by bereavements. In 1731, two years after the death of Robert Spencer, there died the heir to the dukedom itself, Henrietta's son, the Marquis of Blandford. He was evidently a young man of convivial habits and ardent political convictions, for he met his death through a fever contracted after attending a Tory meeting at Oxford and drinking too deeply to the damnation of Sir Robert Walpole. His grandmother was hastily summoned, but arrived too late. There was no answer to her question "How is poor Blansford?" when she arrived, with Lady Dye in attendance, at Balliol College. "Ay," she said, "I suppose he's dead . . . I hope the devil is picking that man's bones who taught him to drink." She stayed to discuss the technical details of the case with the physicians and to condole with Lady Blandford, whose marriage to her grandson she had first bitterly opposed.

In 1733 Henrietta died, and the succession passed to the Sunderland branch. Charles, Earl of Sunderland, who now became heir, had on various counts been for long in his grandmother's bad books. He had married, in defiance of her, the daughter of one of Marlborough's political enemies, Lord Trevor. He was a spendthrift and constantly in debt. The Duchess had given him the diamond sword given to Marlborough by the Emperor Charles. Hearing that he was in the toils of money-lenders, she brought an action at law to recover possession of it and conducted her case in person. Her plea was dramatic and irresistible. "That sword," she said, "my lord would have carried to the gates of Paris; am I to live to see the diamonds picked off one by one and lodged at the pawnbrokers?" Her enemies doubtless said it was the diamonds she wanted.

¹ *Memoirs of O'F. W. Walpole*, ed. A. Dryden.

death in 1737 gave her much satisfaction. Amongst other things, she records her constant purchases of land, believing that in the event of domination by France or the Jacobites and the consequent repudiation of the National Debt, landed property would be the only form of wealth remaining. Her will shows the amazing amount of land she had in her possession. There are "manors, parsonages, rectories, advowsons, messuages, tenements, tithes and hereditaments" in the counties of Surrey, Oxford, Buckingham, Huntingdon, Bedford, Berkshire, Northampton, Stafford, Norfolk, and Leicester. Incidentally this vast ownership of land added very considerably to her political influence. A letter to Dr. Sandby, Prebendary of Worcester, shows us how she would have preferred this influence to be used. "Having a very great estate in my own power," she writes, "I have writ to all my tenants and people that I have influence over to desire that they would not engage to promise anybody their votes till 'tis seen what members will offer. And then I shall desire to give all my interest to such as have the best characters and the best estates without the distinction of that odious thing Party, which I have seen kept up for so many years on each side by turns only for the advantage of the leaders without any honest regard for the good of the nation; and never to be for any man that has an employment, since experience shows us how few there are that have virtue enough to vote on the side of reason and justice when they must lose by it a profitable place, or the hopes of a title, or other trifles not necessary to name." There are all too few details of her daily life in the diary and for them we could well have spared some of the criticisms of Sir Robert and apprehensions about the power of France. She tells us of her chamber organ which played eight tunes and which, as she was frequently crippled by the gout, she was constrained to think better than the Italian opera. She writes of her dogs. She had always been fond of dogs, from the time when Colonel Churchill gave Mistress Jennings a puppy. The niece of Sir William Trumbull was recommended at Court because of her "great civilities of kindness" to the Duchess of Marlborough's dog.¹ The Duchess had now three

1 Downes MS. H.M.C.

very less we have, if there is any
thing worth giving, say as to the
in any place you come there in
your way home that can give you
any trouble to you, if there is, and with
return you may find I have to say
wherever I can any thing, that
is possibly of usefull, but in this
great affair, I would desire you
to consult a little with the
Ambassador, which you would do
it since you may remember the
or Postscript you did write to
me. Depend upon your own
experience as well as you can
the fate of Marlborough tells
me he will write to you in his
leisure, and therefore his time for me
to conclude and to send you
now I am your most
affectionate & most humble servant
my humble service to the Duke of Marlborough

Lady Marlborough is so very long
that I must only take this opportunity
of thanking you for your
kind remembrance, and that you will
be so good, as to make my sincere
compliments to my Ambassador

LETTER FROM THE DUCHESS OF MARLBOROUGH TO
G. BUBB DODINGTON, 1714

Postscript added by the Duke

From the British Museum MSS. Eg. 2678, f. 10

dogs. "They have all of them," she says, "gratitude, wit and good sense, things very rare to be found in this country. They are fond of going out with me; but when I reason with them and tell them it is not proper, they submit and watch for my coming home, and meet me with as much joy as if I had never given them good advice."

The mind was as bright, the pen as incisive and the tongue as sharp as ever, but the inexorable passage of years had brought some of the physical infirmities of age. In 1736 she says: "I would desire no more pleasure than to walk about my gardens and parks; but alas! that is not permitted, for I am generally wrapped up in flannel and wheeled up and down my rooms in a chair. I cannot be very solicitous for life upon such terms, when I can only live to have more fits of the gout". In 1737 she wrote: "I am a perfect cripple and cannot possibly hold out long: and as I have little enjoyment of my life I am very indifferent about it". In 1739 she is "a cripple, lifted about like a child and seldom free from pain".

We may believe, however, that these passages were written in moments of illness and melancholy. When the fits of the gout had passed, the Duchess would be her old vital, indomitable self. Horace Walpole, whose unwilling admiration for her is always struggling with his political hatred, tells a characteristic story of her in illness. "Old Marlborough is dying," he writes to Sir Horace Mann in 1741, "but who can tell? Last year she had laid a great while ill without speaking; her physicians said she must be blistered or she would die; she called out 'I won't be blistered and I won't die'. If she takes the same resolution now, I don't believe she will." The Duchess apparently did take the same resolution. For death had to wait yet a few years for her Grace of Marlborough.

CHAPTER XIX

THE pace was inevitably slackening. There were no new lawsuits and the old ones were gradually being settled. At eighty years of age the Duchess began to withdraw a little from the rush of external affairs and to pass her time more amongst her own circle of private friends and family pre-occupations, though she abated none of her interest in the national fortunes which had concerned her for so long.

A heavy blow fell upon her in 1739 with the death of the beloved Lady Dye, whose marriage four years before to the Duke of Bedford had given her "more satisfaction than I thought had been in store for me". She had added in the same letter to Lady Mary Wortley Montague, "I believe you have heard me say I desired to die when I had disposed well of her; but I desire you would not put me in mind of it, for I find now I have a mind to live till I have married my Torrismond, which name I have given long since to John Spencer". "Torrismond" was a legacy from a play she had seen many years before—Dryden's *The Spanish Friar*, with a gallant young hero of that name. Now the young Duchess she had loved was dead and Sarah was left with Torrismond whom she had married to her satisfaction, and with whom she remained on excellent terms until her death. John Spencer's life in most respects resembled Torrismond's but little. He seems to have been the typical wild young gallant, always in scrapes and more familiar than he perhaps should have been with the interior of the round-house.* They said that he "never soiled his fingers with silver", and his appearance in the streets frequently caused riots amongst the chair-men. But with all his youthful folly, he possessed a charm that, whatever its effect on others, was certainly

* The century's equivalent to a police-station

potent enough to keep his formidable grandmother's affection. With her he successfully took liberties seldom attempted by anyone else, though it may perhaps be guessed that Sarah was always most likely to be conquered by those who were not afraid of her, or who would trouble to show her the small unnecessary courtesies specially prized by the old from the young. This John Spencer seems to have done. In the letters she wrote to "Johnny" in old age¹ there are references to small presents—honey, turkeys, grapes, periodicals which might interest her—all trifling enough but standing for thoughtfulness and affection. "Johnny's" education had always been a matter of special concern with her. She recommends him in 1726 to pay attention to his tutor. "He can assist you very well in writing English correct[ly] and I dare say when you reflect you will think it ridiculous in a man not to be able to express himself properly in his own language." At the end of her life she had the pleasure of receiving and spoiling his children, and we have in the letters a wholly delightful little picture of the terrible Duchess of Marlborough sitting at "drafts" with her two great-grandchildren, whom she found charming. "They both beat me shamefully," she declared, but adds, with a touch both of pride and of pathos, "I believe really they like to come to me extremely." There were, on this occasion at least, presents for them at their great-grandmother's, and Grace Ridley, the Duchess' friend and waiting-woman, was "pressed mightily to know what they were". Sarah amused herself by asking the children to choose between a kiss and a present, and recounts that, child-like, they unhesitatingly chose the present.

There were other more sophisticated pleasures, too, in the Duchess' old age. She had complained that at Marlborough House "there are many visitors, though few that have any sense or are capable of any friendship or truth". But there were exceptions. She had enjoyed the esteem and friendship of brilliant and distinguished men all her life, and a little group of them now gathered round her and enlivened by their wit and talent many hours which might have been lonely or wearisome. Lord Chesterfield, we have seen, was one, and

¹ Preserved at Althorp, and here quoted from the MSS. there.

he brought some of his friends with him to Blenheim, Marlborough House, Windsor Lodge or Wimbledon. Beside Pulteney and Carteret, leaders of the Opposition, there came Lord Burlington, of high repute as a connoisseur and an architect; Bolingbroke, who had turned his exile to good purpose by cultivating his talents in literature; Alexander, Earl of Marchmont, and his son Hugh, and Lord Polwarth, one of the few men Walpole esteemed as an opponent.

Alexander, Earl of Marchmont, died in 1740, but his son succeeded him in the Duchess' friendship. On hearing of the Earl's death, she wrote to Hugh,¹ "I am but just awake and they bring me the melancholy message your lordship sent me of poor Lord Marchmont. . . . When it is over it is better for those that are gone than for friends that remain after them. . . . I hope you will not take it ill since I believe upon this sad occasion you may want money immediately, that I offer to send you a thousand pounds which is half the legacy;² and if you please you may call it so much money lent, to which I can see no manner of objection; and if it be of the least use to you, it will very much oblige me, who am, and ever shall be, with the greatest esteem imaginable . . . S. MARLBOROUGH".

The Duchess, who had once said, "Prithee do not talk to me of books", now heard talk of them often and read them with pleasure, though no book could ever delight her as much as good conversation. Her references to books, however, are few and not vey illuminating. Like everybody else she read *Robinson Crusoe*, which would be further recommended to her as being by a Whig and the author of *The Shortest Way with the Dissenters*. In various letters we find quotations from Montaigne, Cowley, Dryden, and Buckingham's *Rehearsal*. Addison's *Rosamond* was dedicated to her and his *Cato* made her drop tears. She read Henry Brooke's *Gustarus Vasa* in manuscript. One very great man indeed, conquered her with his pen. In 1726 Dean Swift published *Gulliver's Travels*, but anonymously. His friend Gay wrote to him on November 17th, "The Dowager Duchess of Marlborough is in raptures over it; she says she can dream of nothing else since she read

¹ *Marlborough Papers*.

² That she had left him in her will.

it . . . that if she knew Gulliver, tho' he had been the worst enemy she ever had, she would give up her present acquaintances for his friendship." In 1736 Swift's old enemy, who was of a temperament to appreciate brilliant satire, and who by now knew the identity of "Gulliver", wrote that she "had not been pleased so much for a long time as with what he writes. . . . He certainly has a vast deal of wit; and since he could contribute so much to the pulling down of the most honest and the best-intentioned ministry that ever I knew, with the help only of Abigail and one or two more and has certainly stopped the finishing stroke to ruin the Irish in the project of the half-pence, in spite of all the ministry could do, I could not help wishing that we had his assistance in the opposition; for I could easily forgive him all the slaps he has given me and the Duke of Marlborough, and have thanked him heartily whenever he would please to do good. I never saw him in my life; and though his writings have entertained me very much yet I see he writes sometimes for interest".

It was not altogether surprising that her interest in literature received a stimulus during these years. Swift was not the only great man to whom she paid tribute. In 1735 she had made the acquaintance and secured the friendship of the greatest literary figure of her age, for the nine years' unclouded friendship between the Duchess of Marlborough and Alexander Pope began at that time. It was a friendship between the two most redoubtable and most feared personalities in London, both famous for their quarrels and for their pride, and the fact that it lasted unbroken until it was ended by death is surely a tribute both to the great poet and to the great lady. Pope and the Duchess had several friends in common, any one of whom might have made them known to each other and smoothed the way to a cordial relationship. Bolingbroke, Chesterfield and Hugh Marchmont were all intimates of Pope, and Sarah's old friend, Sir William Trumbull, had been kind to the poet in his youth. Pope also belonged politically to the opposition the Duchess was then supporting. By 1735 he was already kindly enough disposed to the Duchess to add a note to the re-publication of his *Epistle to Cobham* in that year, explaining that the four-lined

attack on Marlborough had been misconstrued, and that he proposed to try and suppress it in as many copies of the poem as he could recall. Pope did not lightly suppress anything he had written, once it had reached a form finished enough for publication. The same epistle contained lines on Godolphin which would recommend their author to the Duchess:—

"Who would not praise Patritio's high desert,
His hand unstained his uncorrupted heart,
His comprehensive head! all intr'sts weigh'd,
All Europe sav'd, yet Britain not betray'd.
He thanks you not, his pride is in piquet,
Newmarket fame, and judgment at a bet"

Further, in the edition of Pope's letters published in the same year (1735) there was one disparaging both the building of Blenheim and the characters of its owners. This was omitted from the subsequent edition of 1737 published under Pope's own superintendence. In 1739 he wrote to Swift, "The Duchess of Marlborough makes great court to me, but I am too old for her, mind and body", for he was sensitive enough to appraise rightly Sarah's inexhaustible vitality which contrasted so tragically with his physical frailty, despite her twenty-eight years' seniority.

The following year the Duchess embarked on an enterprise in which she asked Pope's help. She was going to write her memoirs, but felt she needed expert assistance in the task. She seems to have applied to Pope to supply a collaborator. After consultation with Lord Chesterfield, Pope suggested his friend Nathaniel Hooke. Chesterfield in 1741 writes to Pope, "Your friend the Duchess of Marlborough has in your absence employed me as your substitute; and I have brought her and Mr. Hooke together, and having done that will leave the rest to them, not caring to meddle myself in an affair which I am sure will not turn out at last to her satisfaction, though I hope and believe it will be to his advantage." This book was no new idea. As early as 1711 the Duchess had been, to use her own phrase, "a kind of author", and had drawn up the original draft of the book publicly to vindicate her political conduct. Even before that she had written in the

form of a letter to Mrs. Burnet, ("a lady whom I greatly esteemed") an account of the unhappy differences between Queen Mary and her sister. She had intended to publish her political vindication in 1712, but was dissuaded by Walpole, "whom I thought my friend". After that, helped by a secretary of her husband's, she drew up a third document, at Antwerp,¹ "to give an account of my conduct with regard to parties and of the successful artifice of Mr. Harley and Mrs. Masham" to undermine her in the Queen's affections. These three different pamphlets she now proposed to weld together into a single narrative. Hooke undertook the task, but found it no light one. A later anecdote recounts how, propped up in bed, the Duchess would dictate to him for six hours at a stretch, though the addition "without notes" is more picturesque than accurate, since we know that she had by her these three earlier drafts. She trusted nobody with the originals, either of her own work or of letters, so, until they can be examined, we can make no pronouncement on the accusation that she "sadly garbled" the latter. Pope even went so far as to say that she burnt everything that could reflect on her husband, and this is quite likely. Pope himself read a draft of the "Conduct" what the Duchess called her "green book", and made the politic comment, "I wish everybody you love may love you and am very sorry for everyone that does not". Pope had, after all, been the friend of Harley. But in spite of bygone political differences, the friendship grew and flourished, and from Pope's letters to the Duchess, nineteen in number,² we can accurately judge its character. It was, in many ways, Greek meeting Greek. Both were completely fearless and utterly independent and respected these qualities in each other. Both possessed great social charm in the company of friends and intimates. Both had the gift of making large numbers of enemies and a few devoted friends. Neither was in the habit of showing any quarter to an enemy, though perhaps the Duchess was more capable of generosity to the vanquished. Both, under a cynical exterior,

¹ The originals of all these are in Blenheim Palace, and have never been collated with the final version. *See Preface.*

² Partially transcribed in the H.M.C. report on the Blenheim MSS. but unfortunately usually without dates, though obviously not chronological.

were ready to show compassion to the unfortunate and to relieve them by unostentatious charity. These were some of the qualities which held them together. It is not difficult to see why they became friends in the first place, even though Pope was a very great poet and the Duchess objected to most poetry, while the Duchess was a politician and Pope objected to most politicians. Pope was, after all, the most brilliantly witty man of his century, and the Duchess, unlike James II, had quite enough wit herself to appreciate it in others. Conversations between Mr. Pope and her Grace of Marlborough on the subject of various people they disliked must have contained nearly enough wit and malice to furnish a second *Dunciad*, and the Duchess, though well equipped in that way herself, must often have envied Mr. Pope his power of vilifying and ridiculing his enemies. Moreover, it is not possible, one feels, to ignore the appeal which Pope's physical sufferings and his constant and courageous battle with ill health would make to the Duchess. We have many indications in the letters that her sympathy, as was habitual with her, often took very practical forms. She sent her coach to fetch him whenever he planned a visit. Wine and venison constantly found their way to Twickenham. "You have loaded me with presents," he says in one letter, "your bounty has enabled me to make a great figure at Twickenham these holidays." In another letter he writes, "Both your grace and Mr. Allen¹ have done for me more than I am worth. He has come a hundred miles to fetch me. . . . I feel most sensibly not only the kindnesses done me but intended me, and I owe you more than I dare say you remember. First I owe you my house and garden at Twickenham, for you would have purchased them for me when you thought me fond of them. Secondly I owe you a coach and horses, notwithstanding I fought you down to an arm-chair; and the other day when I but named a house in town I saw with what attention you listened to it, and what you meant by that attention." Evidently the Duchess could not induce Pope to accept all she wished to give him.

The references to visits are frequent. Pope goes to Wimbleton, to Marlborough House and to Windsor Lodge. He and

¹ A friend of both.

Chesterfield go to dinner and stay the night. And on another occasion Mrs. Blount and Pope are asked to come together and stay a few days. Nor was the hospitality all on the Duchess' side. In several letters Pope asks her to name any day she likes for a visit to Twickenham. He offers her his house while he is away, if she should like to stay a little while by the river. In another letter he wants her to see his grotto. "What then does your grace think of bringing me back¹ in your coach about five and supping there, now that moonlight favours your return, by which means you will be tired of what you call good company, and I happy for six or seven hours together." Both Pope and the Duchess were very good company, though ill health too often condemned Pope to the solitude of a sick-room, and the Duchess was often in the grip of gout. "I wish your grace were younger and I stronger by twenty years," writes Pope. But the Duchess showed herself unexpectedly tolerant and sympathetic to the disabilities of her invalid visitor. When tired he used apparently to drop suddenly off to sleep, and it may be conjectured that Sarah's endless nervous vitality would sometimes exhaust her frail and sensitive listener. So she would find him asleep! She never took offence. Apparently, she just waited for him to wake! "I find you very considerate in your obliging memory of my infirmities," he wrote; and with what may be a reference to a recent nap, or merely to some cancelled engagement, he adds, "You are the only great lady who might have been angry with me and would not." He actually pays her the sincere compliment of not trying to keep awake when he felt tired. "If I awake you enliven me, if I nod you indulge me," he writes, and he adds that she is "the last person that shall ever see him sleep." When the Duchess is ill in her turn we find kindly letters of sympathy and inquiry, and one of reproach that she will not allow him to come and see her. "To use me thus—to have won me with some difficulty, to have bow'd down all my pride and reduced me to take that at your hands which I never took at any other—I beg at least to be informed more satisfactorily than I can be from your porter of the true state of your health." Another time he

¹ From Wimbledon.

sends Martha Blount to inquire after her at Marlborough House.

Their references to each other in letters to mutual friends were no less kindly. The Duchess writes to Lord Marchmont,¹ "If I could receive letters from you and Mr. Pope as you had leisure, I would never come to town as long as I live." Again, "I shall always be pleased to see your Lordship and Mr. Pope when you will be so bountiful as to give me any part of your time." And in another letter, "I think myself much obliged both to your Lordship and to him [Pope] for having had the least thought of coming to see me."

Pope on his side wrote to Marchmont, "There are many hours I could be glad to talk to (or rather to hear) the Duchess of Marlborough . . . I could listen to her with the same veneration and belief in all her doctrines as the disciples of Socrates gave to the words of their master or he himself to his demon (for I think she too has a devil, whom in civility we will call a genius.)" The reference to Socrates is to a joke between the three friends. Hugh, Earl of Marchmont, teased the Duchess about her devotion to Plato and Socrates, and declared that he and Pope must come to her for lessons in philosophy. "As soon as I have fixed the day for going to Marlborough House, I will give my two scholars notice of it, whom I had rather see than any body there," the Duchess writes to Marchmont.

The Marchmont Papers were not published until 1831 and Pope's letters to the Duchess not available till 1875. But even without these it is scarcely possible to maintain that the friendship they illustrate could have been unknown. Neither the Duchess of Marlborough nor Alexander Pope can be said to have been obscure. Knowledge of their friendship must have been common property and common (and extremely piquant) gossip.

The public memory is however short, the public appetite for sensation large, and the public belief in the printed word pathetic. Only thus can we account for the popularity and acceptance of the legend that Pope, in the intervals of writing the letters quoted above to the Duchess, wrote, printed, and

¹ Marchmont Papers.

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intended to publish in her lifetime a bitter satire on her, which he had accepted a bribe of £1,000 from her to suppress!

Part of the legend originated with Bolingbroke. Pope died in May, 1744. The Duchess, doubtless remembering the cancelled lines on her husband and knowing almost certainly of the further long satirical attack on him, which Pope had also suppressed, wrote to Marchmont, one of his executors, asking him to find out from Bolingbroke (to whom Pope had bequeathed his MSS and unprinted papers) if there were any further references to the Duke (and perhaps to herself) among the papers left at his death. Sarah was quite shrewd enough to have been aware of the blemishes in Pope's character, even while admiring and liking him. His gift for falsehood and mystification was one that she did not share. In his reply to Marchmont Bolingbroke wrote, "Our friend Pope, it seems, corrected and prepared for the press just before his death an edition of the four Epistles that follow the *Essay on Man*. They were then printed off and are now ready for publication. I am sorry for it because if he could be excused for writing the character of Atossa¹ formerly, there is no excuse for his design of publishing it, after he had received the favour you and I know; and the character of Atossa is inserted. I have a copy of the book". This edition was suppressed.

We now know enough of the relationship between Pope and the Duchess to explain "the favour" without any additional conjecture. The story that the "favour" was £1,000 rests solely upon irresponsible and anonymous gossip repeated as if it were fact two years after the death of both Pope and the Duchess! The lines on Atossa were first published in 1746, with this note, "*It is generally said* [the italics are ours] that the D—ss gave Mr. P. £1,000 to suppress them; he took the money, yet the world sees the verses; but this is not the first instance where Mr. P.'s practical virtue has fallen very short of the pompous professions of it he makes in his writing."

This is obviously written by someone wishing to asperse the memory of Pope and published by a publisher eager to sell his book by a sensational puff. Both Pope and the Duchess

¹ The name given to the satirical character for long accepted as being that of the Duchess of Marlborough.

were evidently still "news" in 1746. The title alone shows us that It runs, "*The character of a certain great Duchess deceased, by a certain great poet lately deceased*"¹ How then, if the lines had been suppressed in 1744, did they come to be available in 1746 and with this hostile note? There is no actual proof on this point, but a very strong probability that the furnisher of the lines was Bolingbroke himself. He was the only person ever known to have had a copy of them, and in 1746 he was engaged in vilifying the memory of Pope in other ways. There is nothing, moreover, in Bolingbroke's character which makes this treacherous action improbable. The story of the £1,000 was of course only gossip, founded probably on the sums of money that the Duchess was known to have given to various people who pleased her and perhaps more particularly on the £1,000 she gave to Nathaniel Hooke, Pope's friend, for his help with her memoirs.

The story, based on this worthless foundation, was however repeated by Pope's early editors and his enemies, and by gossips such as Horace Walpole, with various embellishments from sources equally suspect,² until it came to be accepted as authoritative.

The Marchmont Papers, with the MS. of Bolingbroke's letter, were bequeathed to Mr Rose who, referring to the current gossip, pencilled "£1,000" beside the word "favour". This, in the hands of editors, has become "*Lord Marchmont's statement that Pope accepted £1,000*"!

There still, however, remains Bolingbroke's statement about Atossa. He evidently took the passage to be a character of the Duchess, though he said in a letter a few days afterwards that perhaps it is hardly worth while suppressing the passage as the Duchess' friends could say "from several strokes in it" that it was not intended for her. Obviously then, when he wrote his first letter, Bolingbroke had not looked very carefully at the character. We know that the interval between Pope's funeral and Bolingbroke's departure for France was barely a fortnight, and that even later he can have done little but glance

¹ *Harleian Miscellany*

² Most of the history of the documentary evidence will be found collected in C W Dilke's *Papers of a Critic*, 1875. I have here only summarised it.

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cursorily at the passage, and even at that cursory glance had seen that it did not seem to be a very accurate picture of her Grace.

It is an odd thing, but, until Mr. Dilke's paper, it never seems to have occurred to anyone to examine the character itself, even after the hint given by Bolingbroke. Here is the character.¹

But what are these to great Atossa's mind?
Scarce once herself, by turns all womankind!
Who, with herself, or others, from her birth
Finds all her life one warfare upon earth;

5 Shines in exposing knaves, and painting fools,
Yet is, whatc'er she hates and ridicules.
No thought advances, but her eddy brain
Whisks it about, and down it goes again.
Full sixty years the world has been her trade,

10 The wisest fool much time has ever made.
From loveless youth to unrespected age,
No passion gratified, except her rage.
So much the fury still outran the wit,
The pleasure missed her, and the scandal hit.

15 Who breaks with her, provokes revenge from hell,
But he's a bolder man who dares be well.
Her ev'ry turn with violence pursued,
No more a storm her hate than gratitude:
To that each passion turns, or soon or late;

20 Love, if it makes her yield, must make her hate:
Superiors? death! and equals? what a curse!
But an inferior not dependent? worse.
Offend her, and she knows not to forgive;
Oblige her, and she'll hate you while you live;

25 But die, and she'll adore you—then the bust
And temple rise—then fall again to dust.
Last night, her lord was all that's good and great;
A knave this morning, and his will a cheat.
Strange! By the means defeated of the ends,

30 By spirit robbed of power, by warmth of friends
By wealth of followers! without one distress,
Sick of herself through very selfishness!
Atossa, curs'd with ev'ry granted pray'r,
Childless with all her children, wants an heir.

35 To heirs, unknown descends the unguarded store,
Or wanders, heaven-directed, to the poor.

¹ From the text of Elwin and Courthope.

No wonder Bolingbroke remarked that the Duchess of Marlborough's friends might say the character was not intended to be for her! The most exact and detailed lines in it are ridiculous when applied to her, and many others which, though they can be so applied, are so general in character as to be almost equally well applicable to any woman of her type. The Duchess can certainly not be said to have been "scarce once herself (2)". She was never anything else. She certainly found her life one warfare upon earth (4). Though she perhaps shone in exposing knaves and painting fools, she cannot be said herself to have been either (5). Her brain was not "eddy". It was clarity itself (7). In 1744 she was eighty-four, and the world had been her trade for seventy-one years (9). Her youth was far from loveless and her age certainly not unrespected (11). Many passions had been gratified beside her rage (12). No scandal was ever associated with her, and much pleasure had been hers (14). Her revenge was certainly to be feared (15), but there had been many who had been very well with her (16), and Pope himself had been one. Violent she certainly was (17), but not (except perhaps to Anne) to those to whom she was grateful (18). Had her love made her hate (20)? No woman ever lived who held so just an estimate of the value of rank (22), or who was so quick to appreciate kindness done to her (24). She certainly erected both bust and temple to her lord—but were they *in the dust* (26)? Was Marlborough a knave to her and his will a cheat (28)—to her who idolised him until the day of her death and fought tooth and nail to carry out the instructions in his will? Was she robbed of friends, or of followers (31)—she, who had full measure of both, and still a great deal of power? Was she especially selfish? Or sick of herself (32)? Could she under any circumstances be said to be childless or wanted an heir (34)? And, finally, how is it possible to state either that her wealth was unguarded (35), or that it descended to the poor (36)?

Even allowing for the poetic licence of a literary portrait, it is difficult to believe that this was ever intended for Sarah, Duchess of Marlborough. We need only compare it with the picture Pope drew of the Duke and afterwards suppressed, to see what he could have made of her had he *been so minded*.

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The picture of the Duke, though of course hostile, could never have been taken for anyone else. Its personal details are exact.

What then is the explanation of this portrait? How did it come to be written and for whom, if anyone, was it intended? The answer to the second question must come first. It seems, from external evidence, quite clear that the portrait was intended for Katharine, Duchess of Buckinghamshire. The very details which are so absurd when applied to Sarah fit Katharine exactly. Atossa was the daughter of Cyrus and the sister of Cambyses, both kings. The Duchess of Buckinghamshire was the natural daughter of James II and the sister of "James III". She was a woman of almost as violent a temperament as Sarah, had also been engaged in constant warfare and quarrels—with her two husbands, with her children, with her friends and most significant of all, had quarrelled bitterly and finally with Pope in 1729, and had refused all offers of reconciliation. She had exposed the knavish Mr. Ward, M.P., as a forger. She died at the age of 61 or 62. In her loveless youth she sued for divorce from her husband for cruelty. In her age the town rang with a hundred stories of her and "her sober friends were sorry for her". Her preoccupation with her semi-royal rank was notorious and ridiculous. She instituted a lawsuit after her husband's death to contest his will. All her children died before her. At her own death there had to be a lawsuit to discover her heirs, who were found to be two obscure Irish ladies. These facts can scarcely be a series of coincidences.

Two further points. Pope's literary executor, William Warburton, who was perhaps more familiar than anyone else with Pope's writings from personal knowledge, prefixed a note to the "Character of Katharine, Duchess of Buckinghamshire" in prose, which the Duchess herself wrote and gave Pope to polish. The note says, "The Duchess of Buckinghamshire would have had Mr. Pope to draw her husband's character. But though he refused this office, yet in his *Epistle on the Characters of Women*, these lines.

To heirs unknown descends the unguarded store
Or wanders—heaven-directed—to the poor.

are said to mark her out in a manner not to be mistaken for

another" This seems almost final proof—for the lines are from the character of Atossa, and Warburton, though not always trustworthy, can have had no possible motive for misrepresenting the matter

Significant also in this connection is the story—obviously apocryphal and existing in at least two versions—that the character was read by Pope to each Duchess as being a portrait of the other, but that only the Duchess of Marlborough perceived the trick. Our analysis of the character itself should have disposed of this story, even if there were not other arguments against it. But the story is valuable as showing that the character could have been held to be that of the Duchess of Buckinghamshire.

The fact that, while the details of the character are quite obviously not applicable to Sarah, some of the more general lines are, may perhaps be more easily explained when we remember Pope's literary methods. Is it not possible that, at one time or another, he *had* written a character of Sarah (who had after all been the bitter enemy of many of his friends)¹ and had suppressed it as he had that of her husband after he became intimate with her? Pope, however, could seldom bear to discard a piece of work, and would keep stray lines and couplets by him for years and incorporate them in other poems. Might he not then have written the satirical character of Katharine, Duchess of Buckinghamshire, after his quarrel with her and incorporated in it some of the more general lines from the character of Sarah? We know that his portrait of Halifax as *Bufo*² was originally written as one of Bubb Dodington and altered to fit the new subject. It may be that he did the same thing with Atossa—for the name seems to prove that the character was finally written for the Duchess of Buckinghamshire. Pope did not just choose his names at random.

There remains the psychological argument. If there is anything less likely than that Pope would accept a bribe to suppress a satire, it is that the Duchess of Marlborough would offer one. Even if the accepted evidence were not as worthless and as garbled as it is, it would be almost impossible for

¹ Harley, St John, Swift, Arbuthnot

² Epistle to Dr Arbuthnot

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anyone knowing the characters of Pope and the Duchess of Marlborough to believe it, and if we have treated the purely documentary and external evidence in some detail it has been because mere psychological argument is seldom deemed to be sufficient. And it has seemed but justice to the memory of a notable, dignified and wholly admirable friendship between two great personalities, to clear it from the aspersion which has been so long and so unjustly cast upon it.

CHAPTER XX

"I AM going soon out of the world, and am packing up."

So, in 1743, to Torrismond, whose marriage she had had a mind to live long enough to see. Sarah Churchill was ready to depart, and even for her the fire of life was sinking. She was quite willing to turn her back for ever upon the world which had given her her fill. Her will had been made and remade again and again in the last twenty years, according to the varying dictates of family quarrels. Lady Mary Wortley Montague, whose sharp tongue was just as likely to malign a friend as an enemy, wrote in 1750 to her daughter: "Nobody makes their own marriage or their own will: it is what I have often said to the Duchess of Marlborough when she has been telling me her last intentions, none of which she has performed". Lady Mary indeed, when another seven years had heightened the lights and deepened the shadows of her recollection, described the Duchess in another letter as "contriving schemes of plaguing some and extracting praise from others, to no purpose". It must have been difficult to decide whether it was preferable to be Lady Mary's friend or her enemy.

Of the will itself there is little to say. John Spencer was the principal legatee, and to Charles, Duke of Marlborough she left what was requisite for the maintenance of his position. She left Hugh, Earl of Marchmont and Beversham Tilmer, her executors, large estates in various counties. The chief interest lies in the codicil¹ with its many bequests to servants—not a customary proceeding in the eighteenth century—and the gift of £10,000 to William Pitt. It is quite clear that she had originally left a legacy to Pope. In one of his letters to her when she was ill, he says: "I wish the tables may be turned and I leave you a legacy at my death".

¹ See Appendix II.

A proviso that no part of the Duke of Marlborough's history which Glover and Mallet were to write, might be in verse caused much amusement. Horace Walpole wrote, on the publication of the will in the *Evening Post*, after the Duchess' death, "I delight in her begging that no part of the Duke of Marlborough's life may be written in verse by Glover and Mallet. There is a great deal of humour in the thought: to be sure the spirit of the dowager Leonidas inspired her with it". *Leonidas* was the title of a very dull, pompous, and all-but-unreadable heroic poem by Glover. It was sound literary criticism on the part of the Duchess to discourage the chronicling of Marlborough's exploits in such a style. She had also, we must remember, read the poems written about Blenheim in 1705 which had struck even Godolphin as being rather bad, and led him to commission Addison to try his hand. The will was a town topic. Marie, Lady Bolingbroke writes to her friend Isabella, Countess of Denbigh "On n'a parlé pendant quinze jours que du testament de Madame de Marlborough . . . 'Vangeons-nous de la fortune par la mépriser, et par en médire' comme dit Montaigne de la grandeur." But Sarah cared little what they said of her after her death. "They say; What say they? Let them say!" would have been her last words. "One great happiness there is in death," she wrote, "that one should never hear anything more of what they do in this world." The mystical and speculative side of life had touched her but little and not until death is actually on her own threshold does she stop to consider questions which, as she stood beside the deathbed of husband, children and grandchildren might have given her pause. She had always found it easy to "tumble out" her mind on paper, and to Hugh, Earl of Marchmont she writes some of the thoughts which presented themselves to her in these last years. Of death—"When it does come," she says in 1742, "I hope I shall bear it patiently, though I am not yet arrived at so much philosophy as not to think torturing pain an evil; that is the only thing I now dread, for death is unavoidable, and I cannot find that anybody has yet demonstrated whether it is a good thing or a bad one. Pray do not think me wicked in saying this and if you talk to Mr. Pope of me, endeavour to

keep him my friend¹ for I do firmly believe in the immortality of the soul as much as he does, though I am not learned enough to have found out what it is”

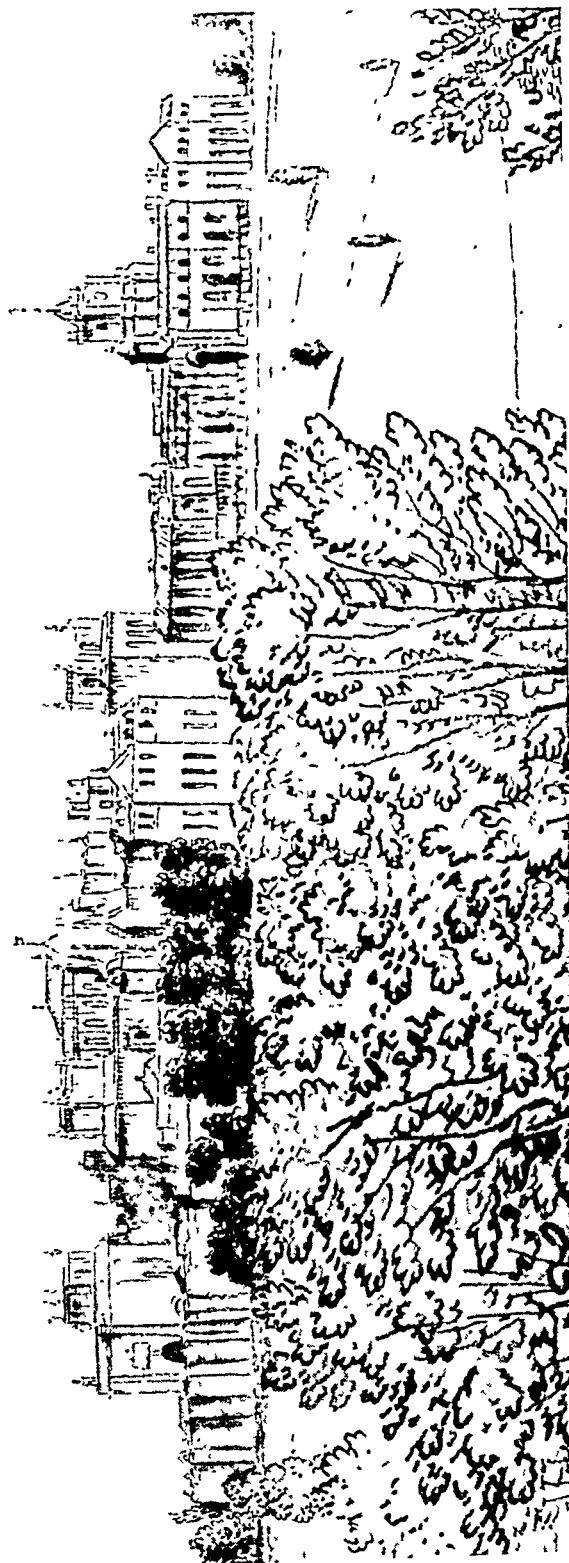
In another letter she writes “As for my dear friend Socrates

. I am not perfectly satisfied even with him, for I think being unconcerned at dying was more reasonable at a great age, and being quite weary of the world which could give him pleasure no more than it can me but notwithstanding this I like him better than any other of the philosophers” Her dislike of doctors persisted She goes on, “He died much easier than our physicians treat us when they blister us and put frying-pans on our heads after it is demonstrated we cannot live I find you are as ignorant of the soul as I am I do think there must be rewards and punishments after this life, and I have a great mind to believe that Kings’ and first ministers’ souls when they die go into chimney-sweeps My servants that are very careful of me, were fearful about having a fire night and day four months together in my chamber, and thought I might be frightened when I could not rise out of my bed if the chimney were on fire and persuaded me to have it swept One of the chimney-sweepers was a little boy, a most miserable creature, without shoes, stockings, breeches or shirt When it was over a servant of mine went to Windsor to equip him with what he wanted, which cost very little, not being so well dressed as the last Privy Seal ”²

Besides being a philosopher, the Duchess was now firmly established as “a kind of author” In 1742 there had appeared “An account of the Conduct of the Dowager Duchess of Marlborough from her first coming to Court until the year 1710” Even after all these years, it created a storm, and Horace Walpole chronicled with disgust that no other publication could vie in interest with “old Marlborough’s secret history of Queen Mary’s robes”—which the Duchess mentions once, and then in parenthesis¹ The Duchess’ opponents rushed into the fray By far the best of the rejoinders was one entitled

¹ This phrase has been constantly quoted out of its context as an *indication* that the Duchess feared Pope!

² Lord Hervey



BLENNHEIM

From a drawing in the British Museum

"*A Review of a late Treatise entitled 'An Account of the Conduct, etc.'*." The author remarks, comparing the Duchess' record with Clarendon's *History*, "His lordship wrote his history purely to show that throughout his whole life he was ever in the right and her ladyship . . . to convince the world that she was never once in the wrong." The Duchess employed Fielding to answer this pamphlet, but his work although eulogistic, is often disingenuous. This quality is indeed one which is found in the Duchess' own work. While as a political record it is absorbingly interesting, on the whole perfectly true, and written in the most vivid, spirited and characteristic manner, it should always be read with a knowledge of the other side of the question¹, and an acquaintance with the various details the Duchess thought it better to suppress. As a political document, in fact, it needs careful editing and explaining, and above all it needs to be compared with the original draft suppressed by Walpole. The controversy over it raged for a long time in the newspapers and must have alternately amused and irritated the Duchess, though she was not to be drawn herself into any further rejoinder. But the success of its publication and the obvious interest it inspired encouraged her to continue with renewed vigour her task of arranging the materials she possessed for the life of her husband which had for long been one of her projects. To Mr. Scrope she writes on September 17th, 1744, "I am entered into a new business which entertains me extremely, tying up great bundles of papers to enable two very able historians to write the Duke of Marlborough's history". Of the two able historians, David Mallet and Richard Glover, Glover retired from the enterprise and Mallet, far from completing, never even started the history.

The Duchess had untied one bundle of letters that was not meant for the historian. These were the love-letters of nearly seventy years ago. She had read them in 1736 but could not bear to destroy them, and perhaps the most moving sentence she ever wrote, was when, in 1743 at the age of eighty-three, she wrote on the back of the packet "Read over in 1743 desiring to burn them, but I could not doe it". If to love

¹ This phrase was itself the title of one of the answers to the *Conduct*.

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¹ This phrase was itself the title of one of the answers to the *Conduct*.

much wins forgiveness, Sarah of Marlborough has little to fear.

Scrope was assisting her in the choice and arrangement of these materials, and on September 20th she dictated a long clear and incisive letter to him commenting on various by-gone political events which her re-reading of the documents had brought again to her mind. She is his "obliged and troublesome humble servant" and sends him a portrait of herself.

On October 4th she is writing to Mallet about the second edition of Lediard's military life of her husband which she read and admired, and comments characteristically upon those who "came to be Admirals without ever having seen water but in a basin, or Generals that never saw any action of war, but only felt from the generosity of their temper that they were incapable of pursuing the enemy!"¹

The letters go on for another fortnight, always clear, always incisive, often amusing. She was living over again the crowded dramatic pageant of her life beside the throne, when the Queen, the Commander-in-Chief and the Lord Treasurer did her bidding, and all Europe admired or feared her.

But that was thirty-nine years ago. She was a very old woman now. And on October 19th 1744, Londoners, to whom she had been a familiar figure for so many years, read in the *General Advertiser* "Yesterday morning, at 9 o'clock died at her house in St. James' Park, Her Grace the Dowager Duchess of Marlborough in the 85th year of her age." Four days later they carried her to Blenheim.

¹ Althorp MSS.

APPENDICES AND INDEX

APPENDIX I

LETTERS FROM THE DUCHESS OF MARLBOROUGH TO QUEEN ANNE.

A

(See page 180)

Oct. 29, 1707.

I think in all respects this is the best way of answering Mrs. Morley's complaints to Mr. Montgomery, first, it will be a shorter trouble than if I waited upon you. You will presently see the end of this; and if I do say anything I ought not to do, it will appear as a record against me to shame me whenever you please and I desire it may do so: for whenever I have found myself in the wrong (to the most inconsiderable person that ever I knew), it has been my nature, and the greatest pleasure I could have, to let them see I was convinced, and to give them all the satisfaction that was in my power: and if this has been my temper to the meanest servant that I have, how much pain must I feel upon any reproach of that kind in the case of Mr. or Mrs. Morley; but, indeed, I am not sensible to the least failing to either: and as I have been faithful to them for these many years, and in their true interest, so I shall be to the last moment of my life, and if this were my last hour, I could safely protest that I did mean only what I said of Mr. Morley as a companion, and not with any disrespectful thought or reflection upon him, to shew what a sort of friendship it was; and if I had thought or ever heard, that he had any such inclination, it would have been the last thing that ever I should have touched upon.

For in my whole life I never did any thing so ill bred or so foolish as to say a thing only to offend you, without doing you any service, though I have ventured very often to do it, when I hoped it might be of use to you; and I am yet so far from repenting of that, that I think there is nothing in my whole life that I have so much reason to be proud of. This is all that is necessary to say as to the accusation concerning Mr. Morley; but if it were not sufficient I could say a great deal more, and I think myself more obliged to

him than to Mrs Morley I remember all his justice and goodness to me in times past I have a thousand things to thank him for, and not one to complain of, he is still the same (I believe) to me that ever he was, and will always be so, unless Mrs Morley thinks fit to give him a prejudice to me, which I am sure I shall never deserve, and what I have said formerly of my fears of his being influenced by some [The word erased here seems to be "villains"] that did not act for his interest, was so plainly for the interest of you both, that I can never be sorry for it, and I heartily wish one you seem to have a better opinion of than me, performs that part, and all others, as well as I have done

I am sure upon Mr Morley's subject she had made bold to me, though upon others she has been very reserved, which were more reasonable to have spoke of, and after her ungrateful behaviour to me, I can't think I am obliged to do her good offices, though in this perhaps I shall not be believed, and yet to disappoint her of all she aims at, I would not tell you a lie, nor never did, notwithstanding those heavy complaints to Mr Montgomery upon her subject yesterday, which can proceed from nothing but great partiality, that more or less blinds all people

Those that are not so cannot think it strange that after what I have discovered of that lady, and her manner to me, that I should endeavour to recover your kindness (which I never made an ill use of) by only telling you the truth, which every body knows to be so, and that Mrs Morley calls saying perpetually ill things of Mrs Hill I beg to have that explained, I never did say that she had taken money, or that it was a crime to have been in a mean service, the last thing being what she could not help but it was publicly known, and I thought it reasonable to let you know it, before the change gave occasion for more discourse, which besides the particular mortification it must be to me, perhaps, without much vanity, some might wonder at, and putting all things together without being quite stupid, I can't but see she aims at much more than she would have you believe And, before this thing broke out, at least to me, she was so passionate, or indiscreet (I don't know what to call it) as to write to me that Mrs Morley had never shown her any distinction, notwithstanding she had the honour to be my cousin

This shews she is not so disinterested and so indifferent as she pretends in most things, for I believe everybody but herself thought she was distinguished enough in having the honour to serve you This letter being very extraordinary, I remember I shewed it to Mr Montgomery, when I had not a dream of what had happened, and I believe it is yet in a heap of letters I kept from the fire What I said of people's taking money was only as a caution to you, and in these very terms, that I had never sold your

APPENDICES

favours, when my circumstances were indifferent, and that I had nothing upon earth to desire, but that all you had to give might be disposed of to your honour, and to strengthen the government.

I never said Mrs. Hill took money; but said she had acquaintance that every body knew would take money for any thing upon earth; that by experience I knew what the custom of the world was, that money would be offered, and arguments too, whenever it was thought there was credit, to persuade people that it was usual in such cases to take money and no hurt; and one did not know what people might be persuaded to that had an inclination to mend their condition, nor what characters they might give of people and things, from that temptation, want of knowledge and experience, which very possibly might not turn to the interest or account of Mrs. Morley.

In this letter is summed up all that I ever said with passion or disrespect to Mr. and Mrs. Morley, and a picture of all that has ever passed concerning Mrs. Hill, and something more than I had ever mentioned before; and I am contented that anybody that is not partial against me to any extraordinary degree should be judge of it; and for fear you should not do me the justice to shew it to Mr. Montgomery, before I seal it, I will do it. If this be true, I am confident he will clear me of all I have been accused of to him; if it be not, I beg from your justice, as the last favour that I shall ever ask, and with as much earnestness as if it were to save the lives of all that are dear to me, that you will say in what other measure I have been guilty of disrespect, or any of those faults you have accused me of.

These are the very words that I have said to you, and if you will reflect, they were expressed with so little passion, that the last time I waited upon you, there were very long spaces on both sides, when it was a profound silence. I never stirred once from behind the screen where I first stood, that I remember, I never in the whole conversation once pulled out my pocket handkerchief till after I had taken my leave.

When at the door you were pleased to give me a mark of your favour, that brought tears into my eyes, and I answered you as Brutus did his friend; and I am sure no woman ever was a better than I have endeavoured to be to Mrs. Morley; and if she had heard me, and her servants of more than twenty years' experience, she would not have been under these difficulties she now is. Their councils, as long as followed, were very successful, and I am sure I have made it the business of my life to serve you well, and to give you the character you would wish to have. Whatever freedom I have taken in speaking to you for your own service, it was when you were alone, and if you had believed those you have so much

reason to credit, without letting so many people be witnesses how hard you are to be persuaded to what is generally thought for your interest and security, it would have been more for your service The consequences of which are plainly to make all those that are true to your interest so uneasy and jealous, that I fear they will never more act as they would have done As to the other side, the party you are so much inclined to are divided mad men, and for the Prince of Wales, who neither will nor can support you

B

(See page 184)

DECEMBER THE 27TH, 1707

If Mrs Morley will be so just as to reflect and examine impartially her last reception of Mrs Freeman, how very different from what it has been formerly, when you were glad to see her come in and sorry when she went away, certainly you can't wonder at her reproaches, upon an embrace that seemed to have no satisfaction in it but that of getting rid of her in order to enjoy the conversation of one that has the good fortune to please you much better, though I am sure nobody did ever endeavour it with more sincerity than Mrs Freeman has done And if I had considered only my interest and that of my family, I might have borne this change without any complaint For I believe Mrs Morley would be sincere in doing us any good But I have once been honoured with an open, kind confidence and trust, and that made all my service agreeable, and it is not possible to lose it without a mortification too great to be passed with silence, being sure I have never done anything to forfeit it, having never betrayed nor abused that confidence by giving you a false representation of anybody My temper is naturally plain and sincere, and Mrs Morley did like it for many years It is not in the least altered But I can't help thinking those things reasonable that appear to be so And I appeal to God Almighty that I never designed or pursued anything but as I was thoroughly convinced it was for Mrs Morley's true interest and honour And I think I may safely put it to that trial, if anything has yet proved unsuccessful, that was of any public consequence, that Mrs Freeman has been earnest to persuade Mrs Morley to And it is not possible for me to dissemble so as to appear what I am not

So much by way of apology for what happened upon Wednesday last And if Mrs Morley has any remains of the tenderness she once professed for her faithful Freeman, I would beg she might

APPENDICES

be treated one of these two ways, either with the openness and confidence of a friend, as she was for twenty years (for to pretend kindness without trust and openness of heart is a treatment for children, not friends), or else in that manner that is necessary for the post she is in, which unavoidably forces her to be often troubling Mrs. Morley upon the account of others.

And if she pleases to choose which of these ways or any other she likes to have Mrs. Freeman live in, she promises to follow any rule that is laid down that is possible, and is resolved to her life's end and upon all occasions to show that Mrs. Morley never had a more faithful servant.

C

(See page 194)

I should not trouble your Majesty with any answer to your last short letter but to explain that you seem to mistake in what I said at church. I desired you not to answer me there for fear of being overheard.

And this you interpret as if I had desired you not to answer me at all, which was far from my intention. For the whole end of my writing to you so often was to get your answer to several things in which we differed, that if I was in the wrong, you might convince me of it, and I should very readily have owned my mistakes.

But since you have not been pleased to show them to me, I flatter myself that I have said several things to you that are unanswerable.

And I hope some time or other you will find leisure to reflect upon them, and will convince Lord Marlborough that he is mistaken in thinking that he has no credit with you by hearkening sometimes to his advice; and then I hope you will never more be troubled with disagreeable letters from me. For I should be much better pleased to say and do everything you like. But I should think myself wanting in my duty to you, if I saw you so much in the wrong, as without prejudice or passion I really think you are in several particulars I have mentioned, and did not tell you of it. And the rather because nobody else cares to speak out upon so ungrateful a subject. The word command, which you use at the beginning of your letter, is very unsightly supposed to come from me.

For though I have always writ to you as a friend and lived with you as such for so many years with all the truth and honesty and zeal for your service that was possible, yet I shall never forget that I am your subject nor cease to be a faithful one.

D

(See page 211)

[1709]

Though I have not had the honour of an answer to my last letter, I hope your Majesty will forgive me if I can't help troubling you once more upon the same subject, because it really seems to me, that nobody speaks to you at this time so freely as I should do, if it might have been allowed me, nor represents sufficiently the consequences of what you are doing.

When your Majesty's affairs are in so good a way, and the war so near an end, as everybody thought it some months ago, sure nothing was so strange as your design to change your ministry, which must end in breaking a Parliament that has done every thing for your service and the good of Europe; and which all the reasonable people I have met with do agree, would be a most rash and desperate step for your Majesty to make at this time. And for God's sake, madam, what is it that you would do all this for? Can you be better served than you are already, or can any new ministers do any more? If it may not be proper for me to mention what Lord Marlborough has done, which may come better from others, I may tell your Majesty what I have lately heard for the honour of my Lord Treasurer from all the considerable men in the city, which is, that if he should be removed, they would not lend a farthing of money, that all their stocks would fall to nothing: and that if there were any money to be had, nobody could be found that would remit it, so that your army must starve, and you must be glad of any peace that the French would give you. And this is not my notion, but what all the substantial men declare of their own accord, and I believe I have said it to some of your ministers, for they affirm, and it is known to be true, that the whole interest and business of the city is now in the hands of such men as will not trust my Lord Rochester or Mr. Harley with a shilling: whereas they say that a minute of the Treasury is now looked upon as a real security.

Therefore, pray, madam, consider seriously what you are doing, and what a precipice you are going upon. For it is in vain to say that you mean only to remove Lord Sunderland—the rest cannot stay in long after him; nor will those that can prevail with your Majesty to make such a step suffer this parliament to meet again. And since they cannot hope to persuade you by arguments to dissolve it, for which there is not the least pretence of reason, their artifice is to get something which will have that consequence, without acquainting you with it before hand.

I never have a letter from Lord Marlborough, in which he does not speak of the mischief that this new scheme does to all the business abroad: and we should certainly have had a peace before this, if it had not been for the hopes which our enemies have of troubles and disturbances here. And I am really afraid of the ill effects that the mortifying accounts he receives every post from hence, may have upon his health and even his life: for I think he is in as much danger of having his heart broke, as of being hurt by the enemy. It must needs grieve any man to death, to see all the fruits of his long labours spoiled by such a scheme as this is, and if he should hear that his son-in-law is disgraced without any crime assigned, and only to gratify the spleen of some men, that at most must be said to have been very useless servants to your Majesty, I know not how he would be able to bear it. The weight he is under must needs be great as it is, from the vast business of all kinds that oppresses him, and the different humours of all nations, and some of our countrymen that he has to struggle with, and who are every day encouraged from hence by your Majesty's new counsellors to give him all the trouble that is possible, and to torment him out of his life if they can.

And if your Majesty should add to his trouble by giving him such a blow as this, and shewing all the world you have no consideration for him after all his faithful services, I know not what impression it may make upon him, nor how it can be reconciled with the professions you made to him at parting, and with your own character in the world, which I know you are desirous to maintain. It is not for me to say what all mankind thinks of his services. But when I consider who your Majesty is going to turn out, and who to take into their places, I own it quite amazes me; for you are removing the Duke of Newcastle, the Duke of Devonshire, Lord Orford, Lord Somers, Mr. Boyle, Lord Marlborough, and Lord Treasurer, and a great many more that have deserved well that I could name, to make way for the Duke of Leeds, and the Duke of Buckingham, Lord Rivers, Mr. Harley and, which is still more strange, to make the Duke of Somerset a great man and a first minister. What can all this come to? I will say nothing more of the men I first named, nor of the last, than that I am very confident there is not such another collection as they and their followers in the hopeful new scheme to be made again on the face of the whole earth.

And if your Majesty thinks you are only going to remove Lord Sunderland, and that the rest of his friends will still serve you whatever resolutions they may take upon that occasion, it is certain they cannot serve you long, for when once the parliament is dissolved and the credit of the nation lost, it will be in nobody's power to serve you, but the French will come upon you unawares.

I heard a comparison of our credit, as it now stands, which I was pleased with. It was said to be like a green flourishing tree full of blossoms, which, upon the least change of ministry, would be nipped and blasted, as fruit is by a north-east wind. And I was told of a very unlikely man to understand the matter of parties that is Sir Godfrey Kneller, who, upon the news of Lord Sunderland's being out, was going to sell all he had in the stocks, but a friend advised him to stay till it was done. If such a man as this thinks of doing so, it is easy to imagine that the alarm will work very far. And I cannot for my soul conceive what your Majesty would do all this for. You have had nothing but wrong representations of the last affair that displeased you. Lord Marlborough did go out of town under great mortifications, which it is plain now were well grounded, and he left it to his friends to apply to your Majesty, and to consider what he should do. But I do affirm, none of them ever proposed the address¹ that has made so much noise, but when others that were out of the service would have done something of that kind, our own friends stopped it. And if your Majesty would be pleased to be informed by those in your own service that knew anything of this matter, they will assure you that they never thought of any such thing nor ever will.

It will be so far from securing anything you desire, that I protest if there be truth in any mortal, I have not spoken with one person who does not say he in his conscience believes it will occasion immediate ruin. Therefore, I once more beg your Majesty, for God's sake, to have a care what you do. I have no manner of interest of my own in what I say, nor will ask to see you ostener than is agreeable to you. But I have written all this for the sake of yourself and of your people in general, that I really take to be in utmost danger and it would be a dreadful calamity now that we are in view of peace and quiet, to have all undone nobody knows for what. If Lord Marlborough has deserved so ill, that those who have unaccountably got a credit with your Majesty, which they resolve to use every way against him, are to run him quite down, then these changes will be quite right. But if your Majesty thinks as I verily believe you do, that he should not be so treated, I hope you will no longer let it be in the power of others to mortify so old and good a servant.

¹ To remove Abigail

1822-23

See page 27

The Codicil

This is a CODICIL to the Last Will and Testament of the
Duchess Dowager of Marlborough, written in my presence, and
published, bearing date the eleventh day of November 1822, by
will I do hereby make and declare the following:

Whereas I am possessed of several sums of money, to wit, £1000
to the yearly sum of £1000, I do hereby make and declare the

Now I bequeath the same to my executors to be applied in the
following uses—

To James Stephens, £300 yearly.
To Grace R. R. Baily, £300 yearly.
To Robert Marbury, £300 yearly.
To Elizabeth Arbor, £300 yearly.
To Anne Paton, £300 yearly.
To Olive Loft, £300 yearly.
To John Griffiths, £300 yearly.
To Hannah Clarke, £300 yearly.
To Jeremiah Lewis, £300 yearly.
To John Dorset, £300 yearly.
To each of my two maid-servants, £100 yearly.

Humphreys, the yearly sum of £100.
To Walter Jones, £100 yearly, and to each of the
footmen that shall continue in my service to the yearly sum of £100,
the yearly sum of £100.

To Margaret and Catherine Soper, £100 yearly, and to
The overplus of such sum annually, to be paid to John Soper
I give to John Soper, £100 yearly, and to each of his
trinkets, and small pieces of furniture.

I give to the wife of the Soper, £100 yearly
(if he should live to be married) and to each of her daughters
have three brilliant diamonds, to be paid to her £100 yearly
which I shall not give to the wife of the Soper, £100 yearly
I give the same to the wife.

I give to my granddaughter, Mary Duchess of Leeds, my diamond solitaire, with the large brilliant diamond it hangs to, also the picture in water colours of the late Duke of Marlborough, drawn by Lens

I give to my daughter Mary Duchess of Montagu, my gold snuff-box, that has in it two pictures of her father, the Duke of Marlborough, when he was a youth. Also a picture of her father covered with a large diamond, and hung to a string of small pearls for a bracelet, and two enamelled pictures for a bracelet of her sisters, Sunderland and Bridgewater

I give to Thomas Duke of Leeds £3,000

I give to my niece, Frances Lady Dillon, £1,000

I give to Philip Earl of Chesterfield, out of the great regard I have for his , , , , I received from him, my £20,000

I give to W , , , , account of his merit in the noble defence he made for the support of the laws of England, and to prevent the ruin of his country

I give to Mr Burroughs, Master in Chancery, £200 to buy a ring

I give to my executors £500 each to buy them rings

I give to the Earl of Clancarty, above what I have already given him, £1,000

Whereas John Earl of Stair owes me £1,000 upon bond, and his wife bought me some things in France, but always declined telling me what they cost, I desire him to pay my Lady Stair, and to accept the residue of the £1,000, together with such other sums as I have lent to him

I give to Juliana Countess of Burlington my bag of gold medals, and £1,000 to buy a ring, or something in remembrance of me

I give to the Duchess of Devonshire my box of travelling plate

I give to James Stephens, over and above what I have already given him, the sum of £1,300, and as a further compensation for the great trouble he will have as my acting executor, the yearly sum of £300

To Grace Ridley I give, over and above what I have already given, the sum of £15,000, an enamelled picture of the Duke of Marlborough, a little picture of the Duke in a locket, and my own picture by Sir Godfrey Kneller, and my striking watch, which was the Duke of Marlborough's

I give to Anne Ridley the sum of £3,000

I give to Mrs Jane Pattison my striking watch, which formerly belonged to her mistress, Lady Sunderland

One half of my clothes and wearing apparel I give to Grace Ridley, and the other half equally between Anne Patter and Olive Loftt

I give to each of my chairmen £25

I give to each of my servants one year's wages

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I give to the poor of the town of Woodstock £300.

I desire that Mr. Glover and Mr. Mallet, who are to write the history of the Duke of Marlborough, may have the use of all papers and letters relating to the same found in any of my houses. And I desire that these two gentlemen may write the said history, that it may be made publick to the world how truly the late Duke of Marlborough wished that justice should be done to all mankind, who, I am sure, left King James with great regret, at a time when 'twas with hazard to himself; and if he had been like the patriots of the present time, he might have been all that an ambitious man could hope for, by assisting King James to settle Popery in England.

I desire that no part of the said history may be in verse.

And I direct that the said history shall not be printed without the approbation of the Earl of Chesterfield and my executors.

I give to Mr. Glover and Mr. Mallet £500. each for writing the history.

(Here follows a contingent provision for the younger children of Charles Spencer, Duke of Marlborough.)

I give to Thomas Duke of Leeds my estate near St. Albans, and my freehold at Romney Marsh, Kent.

I give to Philip Earl of Chesterfield my manor at Wimbledon, and also my manors in Northampton and Surrey.

I give to the Earl of Clancarty my manors and lands in the county of Buckingham.

To William Pitt I give my manor, &c., in the county of Buckingham, late the estate of Richard Hampden, Esq.; and leasehold in Suffolk; and lands, &c. in Northampton.

And to—Bishop, Esq., my manor, &c. in Oxford, with the furniture, &c.

To Hugh Earl of Marchmont, my manor, &c. in Buckingham, late the estate of Sir John Witteronge, Bart.; and also my manor, &c.; in the same county, late the estate of Sir Thomas Tyrrel.

To Thomas Lord Bishop of Oxford, my manor, &c. in Bedford.

To Beversham Filmer, Esq., my manors, &c., in Leicester and Northampton, late the estates of Sir Thomas Cave.

To Dr. James Stephens, my estates, &c., in Berks and Huntingdon.

And all other undisposed of estates or effects to John Spencer, his heirs, &c.

SARAH MARLBOROUGH.

Dated August 15th, 1744.
(Witnessed by)

SANDWICH.
GEO. HEATHCOTE.
HENRY MARSHALL.
RICHARD HOARE.

APPENDIX III

A CONJECTURE

Note

The theory I here put forward is one that grew only out of my own perception of elements in the character of the Duchess which I could not reconcile one with another by ordinary psychology. It was not suggested to me by anyone. Having worked it out in my own mind, I submitted it to those with expert knowledge on these matters, and finding that they held it tenable, I felt justified in stating it here. I am indebted to Dr Hubert Norman, whose "Mental Disorders" (Edinburgh 1928) I consulted, who in conversation confirmed me in my opinion about the Duchess, and to whom what I have here written has been submitted.

Mental science, which in the last few years has done so much to explore the hitherto uncharted seas in the mind of man, might perhaps help us to understand and explain the Duchess of Marlborough. The traditions of violence, of quarrelling, of constant and often unnecessary litigation, the abnormal sensitiveness to slights—all these have invariably been ascribed to a childish lack of control, to petty vindictiveness, to ill-breeding. But does it not seem a little odd that a woman who showed herself to be of a high intellectual calibre, capable of thinking politically, of meeting statesmen and ministers on equal terms, shrewd, penetrating, clear minded and clear headed, with a mental equipment rather masculine than feminine in its nature, should turn herself on occasion into half spoilt child, half virago? Again, the quarrels and litigations about money have invariably been put down to avarice. But, apart from various incidents chronicled in the preceding chapters, we have proof that during her widowhood alone the Duchess gave away over £300,000. True, she was enormously wealthy and could afford it. But the avaricious person does not give money away, however much he has, and the more he has the more he wants, and will keep. Taking all these points together, there seems here to be a problem, not to be solved by epithets "Termagant" Yes, but why termagant? "Quarrelsome" Yes, but why quarrelsome? "Violent" Yes, but why violent? The Duchess of Marlborough was many other things and many greater things than these, and apart from her

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purple qualities we have seen how in private life she could, when she liked, be gethering charming affectations first and then parades.

It has been established that there are mental states which in their extreme form may be held to be abnormal and anti-social but which can only be modified as only to produce and slightly overbalance certain characteristics and lead under certain conditions to extravagance and excess not found in those of those who are anti-social whose minds are completely normal. We may here have the key to our problem.

It seems possible or at any rate not too difficult to be put forward as a theory that in Sarah Churchill we may have that particular form of mental state or abnormality known to day as paroxysm. The characteristics of this condition seem to fit what we know of her. There were, from the first, qualities of temperament which in the light of this theory take on a new and added significance. Peculiar irritability showed itself in her to a high mark, later, we have stories and traditions which cannot have been without foundation, however much exaggerated, to stories of excessive irritability, bursts of anger and abnormally violent fits. We may note in this connection that her friend Bishop Hare remonstrated with her for her "ill-grounded suspicion and violent paroxysm". It is characteristic of paroxysm that, although always traceable in the earlier stages by emotional extremes in some form, the evolution of the distinguishing symptoms is very slow. The Churchill quarrel with Anne and hatred of Mrs. Masham came to their climax in 1708-1709-1710 when aged 31 yrs, in addition to the nervous shock she then suffered, any mental irritability would inevitably be increased. From this period too we date as well as the almost sacerdotal rigourous another characteristic paroxysm symptom - the writing of endless letters denunciatory or self justifying. The letters themselves in their coarse, orderly haphazardness - the workings of a mind moving clearly, rapidly and logically, but only along certain lines - are typical of this state. This symptom was to become more marked with age, and we may remember the Duchess of Marlborough in her withdrawn, writing pillow of letters, rebuking her comments and defending herself on their basis, or rather, pointing out her grievances in pamphlets and pamphlet like letters to Walpole, to Burnet, to Mrs. Burnet to Dr. Hare, to Mrs. Cholophilus and to many others.

The actual pamphleteering to the Press, although in a private person, it would be taken as pointing to a paroxysm state, most of course be attributed to the case of the Duchess.

There seem also to have been periods of depression when she shunned and abhored all company, a state often experienced by paroxysm, especially when confronted with the Duchess' more

See Appendix I.

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than normal vitality and intense nervous energy. "I used," she says herself, "to run from the court and shut myself up alone for six weeks in one of my country houses," and there are several letters¹ to her at different periods protesting against her continued solitude.

It may be asked—how is it possible to reconcile this theory of mental instability with the intellectual capacity of the Duchess? There is nothing in paranoia, even in its less modified forms, that precludes the normal working of intelligence, frequently indeed of a specially high intelligence, in channels outside the special region of sensitiveness. It can, as it were, be isolated. This indeed is one of the marks that distinguish it most clearly from other forms of abnormality which carry with them a measure of mental enfeeblement. The Duchess' mind, outside her perpetual quarrels, retained its clearness, its penetration, its judgment of men and affairs, its amazing grasp of detail until the moment of her death, and such a phenomenon would be the rule rather than the exception in the kind of case we are describing.

One final point. It has further been established that in the overwhelming majority of paranoiac cases there is, somewhere in the family history, a record of mental instability which, although it may itself take any form, has left its trace thus, not indeed as a rule in the immediate inheritors, but in some either collateral or more distant descendants. This evidence is not lacking in the case of the Duchess.

In the Public Record Office the following entry is to be found among the Chancery Inquisitions.² "Inquisition taken at King's Hatfield 16th December 5. Jas. I [1613] before W. Avill Esq. and Robert Carter, Gent., . . . it was found that the said John Jennings on the 16th day of August became lunatic, having lucid intervals, but so that the control of himself, his lands, tenements, goods and chattels was not sufficient."³ This was Sarah Churchill's grandfather, from whom it is possible she inherited at least the tendency to mental strain and defective control. We know nothing of her more immediate parentage from this angle. We may perhaps remember that her mother would seem to have been a woman of excitable temper and not calculated to supply the tranquillising influence and disciplinary training that might have neutralised Sarah's inheritance of emotionalism.

If we have considered this theory at all it is because it seems
much to cloud the memory of the Duchess. I trust we

¹ From Maynwaring, Sunderland, Pulteney, Godolphin and Montague.

• From Mayhew, *Curiosities*.
• Series 2. Vol. 298. No. 63.

• Translated from the Latin.

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to attack her for political purposes, and those who want a cheaply picturesque and even sometimes slightly vulgar story of her life, have found it easy to fasten on this side of her and write it up, either for political or journalistic purposes. But she is worth more than that. We are not attempting to deny the violences, the hysteria, the vindictiveness, the quarrelsomeness, the arrogance. We only offer an explanation which makes them reconcilable, in a way they do not otherwise seem to be, with the great gifts, both of mind and character, of this extraordinary woman.

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If we have considered this theory at all it is because it seems at once a more reasonable and a more dignified method of accounting for the distressing violences of character which have done so much to cloud the memory of the Duchess. Those who desire

¹ From Maynwaring Sunderland, Pulteney, Godolphin and Montague

² Series 2 Vol 298 No 63

³ Translated from the Latin

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PRINTED BY PURVEY AND SONS
FALTON (SOMERSET) AND LOYDON

